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on the history of Auschwitz

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Bernd C. Wagner

IG Auschwitz

Forced labor and extermination of prisoners
of the Monowitz camp 1941 - 1945

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In the foreground: statistics on the labor requirements of IG Auschwitz in 1942 In

the background: prisoners on the factory construction site of the

IG Farben in Auschwitz 1944

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Introduction

IG Auschwitz: Like no other, this name is a reminder of the involvement of German industry in the crimes of the "Third Reich". Although it was only one of many companies that supported the extermination policy of the SS through active participation or permissive indifference, IG Farbenindustrie became a symbol of the shared responsibility of German industry with this company in the vicinity of the concentration and extermination camp.

Large-scale industry and the SS administration worked hand in hand in Auschwitz in a terrifying way: the expansion of the small site, initially used as a reception camp, into the largest extermination site of the "Third Reich" would not have been possible in such a short time without the material help of IG. The company supported the camp commandant's expansion plans by providing building materials from its "war essentials" contingent that were otherwise hardly available. The quid pro quo was the provision of prisoner labour for the construction of the IG Auschwitz/Monowitz plant from April 1941. Only through this barter was it possible for the construction management to actually push through the allocation of concentration camp prisoners already approved by Göring and Himmler. In view of the imminent camp expansion, Commandant Höss, who was responsible for the allocation, had no interest in handing over prisoners. In other words, the SS by no means forced them on the IG; rather, the management had to buy the release of the necessary labor from the camp for the start of construction in the spring of 1941 through direct cooperation with the SS on site. Even if it was not yet foreseeable at this time that Auschwitz would develop into the center of Nazi extermination policy, this paved the way for IG's shared responsibility for the deaths of more than 25,000 people.

The extent of the IG management's involvement in the inhumane under-supply, the exhausting and harassing use of prisoners on the factory premises and finally the deportation and gassing of those no longer fit for work in Birkenau was already known, at least in outline, immediately after the end of the war. In the course of the Nuremberg follow-up trial against the IG, the construction of the production facility in Auschwitz was one of the central issues. The charges against the plant manager there, Walther Dürrfeld, and the company directly involved in the planning, construction

In July 1948, the court handed down the highest sentence of the proceedings, eight years, to Otto Ambras, a member of the board of directors involved in the construction and operation of the plant ¹.

the sentence would probably have been significantly lower – the beginning of the Cold War, which made cooperation with the German economic elites more important for the Americans again, was already casting its shadow.

The changing global political situation, the comparatively lenient sentences and finally the swift release of the IG managers pushed the discussion forward.

¹ NMT, Vol. 8, p. 1206 ff.

The debate about the responsibility of the arms companies soon faded into the background. For the majority of Germans, and especially for the ruling elite, the economic recovery represented a milestone on the path to sovereignty for the young Federal Republic. The de facto successor companies of the IG Farben industry (legal succession had been ruled out when the conglomerate was unbundled) therefore also looked to the future. In rebuilding their leading global export position, the management boards of BASF, Bayer and Hoechst saw the memory of the events between 1933 and 1945 as nothing more than an annoying obstacle. The course of the model case "Wollheim v. IG Farben" then testified to the efforts to reach an acceptable solution as quickly as possible regarding the compensation of former forced laborers in the light of international publicity. The negotiations on the amount of compensation nevertheless lasted until the beginning of 1957. 5,855 former Jewish prisoner laborers in 42 countries finally received a total of DM 27,84,500. The motive for the compensation payments to the former inmates of the Monowitz camp on the part of the IG successor companies was probably more the fear of negative effects on the export business than the insight into mistakes made by the former group management.

Even in the period that followed, the statements of the major German corporations sounded as if they were only prepared to use prisoners under state compulsion. However, anyone who has ever studied the sources compiled for the IG proceedings will find such a view untenable. Even the meticulous compilation of the evidence against the IG by the American investigators between 1945 and 1947 makes it absolutely clear that there can be no question of state compulsion to use prisoners at the IG in Auschwitz and elsewhere. On the contrary, the initiative of the IG management to use concentration camp prisoners at supposedly low cost had to be pushed through against local resistance. This for
However, the evidence provided by the IG as an example is not an isolated case: as more recent investigations show, the use of prisoners only occurred in exceptional cases at the insistence of Nazi authorities².

More than 50 years after these events, some large German companies now want to set "a final material sign, out of solidarity, justice and self-respect"³. This "response" to the "moral responsibility of German companies", however late it may come, is undoubtedly to be welcomed as a sign of historical insight. In view of the high average age

of the surviving prisoners and forced laborers of 81 years appears
the hectic pace of the negotiations is entirely appropriate, even if it only highlights the half-century of inaction all the more clearly. Whether this is so

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² Cf. Spoerer, Company.

³ "Zeichen der Solidarität und Gerechtigkeit" ("2 Signs of Solidarity and Justice"), declaration by the companies Allianz AG, BASF AG, Bayer AG, BMW AG, Degussa Hüls AG, Dresdner Bank AG, Friedr. Krupp AG Hoesch-Krupp, Hoechst AG, Siemens AG, Volkswagen AG, February 22, 1999.

⁴ Cf. the statement by US Deputy Secretary of the Treasury Stuart Eizenstat at the negotiations in July 1999; taz, July 17, 1999.

The boldly formulated "central objective of the fund, to provide affected victims of National Socialism with cooperative, fair, unbureaucratic and, above all, rapid assistance", is in fact at the forefront.

However, the categorical demand for "satisfactory legal certainty"⁵ against further legal action calls this into question. The arguments put forward are strikingly reminiscent of the Wollheim proceedings in the 1950s.

However, the focus of the debate on material compensation, as important as these payments may be for Eastern European forced laborers in particular, sometimes obscures the essentials. Many former prisoners do not so much expect financial support, which would have helped them a great deal immediately after the end of the war, but which must appear to be a thoroughly anachronistic gesture in their later years. More important for many of them would be a genuine and unconditional acknowledgement of their shared responsibility for the crimes committed during the "Third Reich" by the companies involved. Instead of constantly pointing out that the companies that emerged from the IG Farben industry are not the legal successors of this group, it would not have hurt the reputation of BASF, Bayer and Hoechst to face up to the factual succession of their parent company. However, the managers did not even feel able to do so on the occasion of the meeting of survivors of the **Mo** nowitz concentration camp (**KL**) in the fall of 1998. A personal request for an apology from the former inmates, representing the company management at the time, would have been a far more effective means than seeking legal protection in order to "to counter class action lawsuits in the USA and to prevent campaigns against the reputation of our country and its economy "⁶.

One of the main reasons for the tactic pursued for decades by the successor companies of the IG to remain silent about the responsibility of their management during the "Third Reich" was certainly the certainty that **knowledge of the** various aspects of the National Socialist extermination policy was and is extremely limited among the general public. In this sense, too, a thorough investigation and presentation of Auschwitz is necessary.

Research situation

In terms of the sources available, historical-empirical research on Auschwitz has fallen far short of its potential to ^{date}⁷. There are various reasons for this: on the one hand, there is certainly the consideration of certain reservations of survivors against a "historicization" of the subject matter - a view which, however, was often expressed much more vehemently than by those affected, mostly by self-named advocates. The central fear here seemed to be that a historical "appropriation" could, as it were, level out the uniqueness of the National Socialist crimes - a notion that would limit the possibilities of a "historicization".

⁵ "2 Signs of solidarity and justice", 22.2.1999.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ A good overview of the history of "Holocaust research" can be found in Pohl, Holocaust Research, S. 1-14.

historians probably overestimated. On the other hand, the overall political situation of the post-war decades undoubtedly had an impact on the treatment of the subject: Up until the 1980s, Auschwitz was instrumentalized for political goals or expectations in East and **West**.

It was only in the last decade that two circumstances changed the situation for historiography considerably: the end of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe opened up important archive holdings to Western historians and thus enabled a renewed and more intensive examination of the history of the National Socialist concentration camps in particular. It may have been of similar importance that the grandchildren of the victims and perpetrators of the Nazi era were now growing up in academic institutions. Relatively unburdened by the emotionally charged debates about "coming to terms with the past" in the "old" Federal Republic, because they were not personally involved, young researchers were able to set about investigating German crimes in the Second World War and ask new questions about the darkest chapter of German history without the tacit self-restrictions of the older generations of historians.

In this context, the present work would also like to make its contribution to research into the events of that time. It focuses on the fourth Buna plant of IG Farbenindustrie, which was built just a few kilometers east of the Auschwitz concentration camp in the spring of 1941. From the very beginning, the management used prisoners in its construction and opened its own concentration camp on the ruins of the village of Monowitz in the fall of 1942. It was the first camp initiated and financed by a private company that was built exclusively for the labor deployment of prisoners. This study focuses on the group of concentration camp inmates, as their example highlights the consequences of the use of forced labour organized according to racial ideological principles. Although the proportion of other foreign and forced laborers in the workforce was considerably higher overall, almost all of the approximately 30,000 people who died as a result of their work for the chemical giant by the time the factory site was evacuated in January 1945 were concentration camp inmates.

Despite its far-reaching significance for the cooperation between the SS and the armaments industry, this is the first time that IG Auschwitz has been the subject of a monographic study. Among the works that deal with the IG Farben industry as a whole, the essays and books by the American historian Peter Hayes, who has published the most conclusive account of the IG Farben industry to date, deserve special mention⁸. Based on a broad range of sources, he critically analyzes the function of the chemical company in the "Third Reich", but without falling back into the old stereotypes. As he focuses on the entire group, the description of IG Auschwitz in his compact study, published in 1987, is inevitably brief. In comparison to Hayes' differentiated study, the other books on IG fall well short. For example, Joseph Borkin, a former prosecutor in the

⁸ Cf. Hayes, *Industry*.

The Nuremberg Trials, as late as 1978, presented the image of an all-powerful IG whose cooperation had made Hitler's extensive power politics possible in the first place⁹. The American thus followed the indictment of 1947 almost unchanged, which - in accordance with the customs of the American legal system - had deliberately formulated the role of the corporation in drastic terms. The fact that Borkin lacked the historian's critical view of the sources can also be seen from the fact that he relied exclusively on the Nuremberg trial documents already known to him. It is also irritating that he did not even correctly reproduce the name of the IG's own camp in Monowitz¹⁰.

In 1990, Gottfried Plumpe's work¹¹ provided the main impetus for the academic debate on the role of the IG Group in the employment of prisoners at the Auschwitz concentration camp, which is by no means over. This first attempt at an overall account of the history of the IG, written from the perspective of the company due to the selection of sources alone, offers

The work of Peter Hayes¹² in particular has formulated numerous points of criticism for the period of interest here. Plumpe's work, which is primarily oriented towards technical and economic issues, leaves many historically relevant questions unanswered.

answered. In particular, the relationship between IG Farben and politics is obviously a sensitive topic for Plumpe, which is already treated contradictorily in the introduction¹³.

Plumpe's decision to deal with the central question of cooperation between IG and KL Auschwitz in a subchapter entitled "Rubber synthesis in the Second World War 1939-1945" must have seemed downright provocative¹⁴. At the Aus

⁹ Cf. Borkin, *Alliance*, p. 7.

¹⁰ According to Borkin, *Alliance*, p. 113, the camp complex in Auschwitz consisted of four parts, whereby, in addition to the main camp and Birkenau (I and II), he refers to the IG factory facilities as "Auschwitz III" and the Monowitz camp as "Auschwitz IV". However, nowhere in the sources does an Auschwitz IV appear, rather it seems to be a mixture of different titles. The Monowitz camp, initially called "Buna camp", then "Monowitz labor camp", was the "Auschwitz III" concentration camp from November 1943, to which all other subcamps with the exception of Birkenau were subordinate. It was not until the end of 1944 that it became independent as the Monowitz concentration camp. The name "Camp IV" refers to the internal numbering assigned by the IG-Bauleitung to all the accommodation camps located around the factory site. Monowitz, which was initially planned as a civilian camp, was given the number four in accordance with its original planning. However, the editors of the *Historical Atlas of the Holocaust* seem to have similar difficulties in differentiating between the names of camps and factory facilities. This **USHMM** publication incorrectly states on p. 97 that IG had invested more than 700 million **RM** - roughly the total cost of the IG factory - in Auschwitz III, i.e. in the concentration camp.

¹¹ Cf. Plumpe, *I.G. Farbenindustrie*.

¹² Cf. Hayes, *History*.

¹³ On p. 15 of his book, Plumpe emphasizes the importance of the historical-political context [emphasis added by the author]: "The history of the I.G. cannot be separated from the context of historical processes. There were close interactions with general history, not least political history, which had *a direct influence on the company's development*." Two pages later it says: "As important and ultimately decisive as the connections to political history were for the existence of I.G., they *did not* have a *decisive* influence on the direction of the *company's development*."

¹⁴ In any case, this also provided a target for less well-founded criticism; see Köhler, *Fälschung*.

Karl-Heinz Roth, in particular, is also involved in the debate about Plümpe's work, asking the question, probably only rhetorically, whether IG Auschwitz was a "normal or anomalous product" of a "capitalist developmental leap"¹⁵. Plümpe sees IG's involvement in the extermination machinery of the Nazi state as an unintended consequence of a "sense of responsibility limited to the company-related effects"¹⁶, while Roth sees it as "the logical consequence of a corporate strategy which, after the loss of the First World War, had built up a business monopoly from which it could develop a typically oligopolistic tech

nology offensive against a handful of competitors on the world market"¹⁷. To put it bluntly, Plümpe accuses the IG managers of mere negligence, while Roth accuses them of pure economic power calculations;

However, neither position can be substantiated in this form from the sources¹⁸.

An unusual discussion regarding the central question of when the IG board decided in favor of Auschwitz arose when former IG member Hans Deichmann published his recollection of a conversation he had overheard with his uncle, IG board member von Schnitzler, in 1940¹⁹. According to Deichmann, the IG leadership had already discussed the Auschwitz site in the late summer of 1940. This account, reconstructed solely from memory (Deichmann's diary entries do not begin until a few weeks after the alleged conversation), contradicts all surviving contemporary sources. In the correspondence²⁰, which has since been published, Peter Hayes therefore rightly expresses his doubts about the sequence of events claimed by Deichmann. Even the "statement" published by Schmaltz and Roth after the conclusion of the present work in favor of Deichmann's position does not change this until the emergence of any additional sources²¹.

Beyond the specific IG research, the present work should be seen against the background of studies on other German armaments companies, which have been the subject of increased research efforts since the second half of the 1980s. This began with a predominantly economically oriented documentation of the history of Daimler-Benz AG in the "Third Reich".

¹⁵ Roth, I.G. Auschwitz.

¹⁶ Cf. Hayes, History.

¹⁷ Roth, I.G. Auschwitz, p. 27.

¹⁸ See also Sandkühler/Schmuhl, I.G. Farben.

¹⁹ Cf. Deichmann, Auschwitz.

²⁰ Cf. Deichmann/Hayes, Location.

²¹ Cf. Schmaltz/Roth, Documents. The theses put forward in support of Deichmann are based on a list of construction projects from December 1939, in which the place name Auschwitz is also mentioned. Interestingly, however, the column with the corresponding planning or executing company is marked with a question mark, and there is neither a comment nor a capacity specification for the products Buna, methanol, synol and nitrogen, which had never been produced in combination at a single site before. Since, despite the mention of Buna at the top of the product list, only managers from Merseburg responsible for fuels are listed under the heading of plant managers and there is again only a question mark under the heading of plant engineers, the informative value of the document appears questionable.

tenth Reich"²². Almost at the same time, the Hamburg Foundation for the Social History of the 20th Century published the results of a research project on the role of the Daimler-Benz Group in the development of the German armaments potential²³; the topic of the use of forced labor, which had been largely suppressed until the publication of Ulrich Herbert's monograph²⁴, now came to the fore. In a study that has not gone unchallenged, Klaus-Jörg Siegfried²⁵ examined the living conditions of the various categories of forced laborers in industry using the example of the Volkswagen factory. Among these

Forced laborers at VW from 1942 (at Daimler-Benz probably only from 1944) also included concentration camp prisoners²⁶ who were housed in subcamps of the concentration camps. During the last phase of the war, these satellite camps existed throughout Germany - in each case in the vicinity of large armaments companies²⁷. The most extreme form of exploitation of human labor was to be found where

prisoners in the final phase of the war were used to work in underground production facilities. This topic was dealt with, for example, on the basis of the conditions in the tunnels of Steyr-Daimler-Puch AG²⁸. A few years ago again a study on Daimler-Benz, which examines the conditions in the company's individual plants and camps; interviews with former forced laborers served as the basis for this anthology²⁹. Finally, Neil Gregor³⁰ provided a convincing overall portrayal of this company during the "Third Reich". His study focuses on the question of the management's room for maneuver against the backdrop of increasing political intervention in economic life. The question investigated by Gregor for the Daimler Benz group as a whole is pursued in this study in a focused manner for the individual IG plant in Auschwitz.

After a long period of development, the result of the work carried out under the direction of Hans Mommsen's painstaking research work on the history of the Volkswagen factory and its workers during the "Third Reich"³¹. In this comprehensive study of more than 1,000 pages, comparatively little space is devoted to the working and living conditions of the prisoners at KL Arbeitsdorf, which only existed from the beginning of May to September 1, 1942. According to Mommsen, this prisoner deployment was a pre

²² Cf. Brüninghaus/Habeth/Pohl, Daimler-Benz.

²³ Cf. Daimler-Benz book; Roth/Schmid/Fröbe, Daimler-Benz AG.

²⁴ Cf. Herbert, *Fremdarbeiter*.

²⁵ Cf. Siegfried, *Leben*.

²⁶ Cf. also Fröbe, *Arbeitseinsatz*.

²⁷ For the region of southern Lower Saxony on forced labor at VW and other companies, see Creydt/Meyer, *Zwangsarbeit*.

²⁸ Cf. Freund, *Arbeitslager*; Perz, *Projekt*.

²⁹ Cf. Hopmann/Spoerer/Weitz/Brüninghaus, *Forced Labor*. Reference is expressly made to the excellent bibliography on the whole complex of "forced labor".

³⁰ Cf. Gregor, *Daimler Benz*.

³¹ Cf. Mommsen/Grieger, *Volkswagenwerk*; Mommsen, *Zwangsarbeit*; Mommsen, *Geschichte*.

The camp had an "experimental character"³² and was intended to provide experience for the larger construction projects that were already being planned. The approximately 800 mainly German prisoners deployed in the construction of the light metal foundries lived in relatively tolerable conditions, which in no way compared to those in Monowitz.

Hermann Kaienburg, who had already published a study on Neuengamme in 1990³³, published an anthology a few years later³⁴. The essays contained therein document the state of research in the mid-1990s, but only marginally go beyond already known publications. Among other things, Peter Hayes takes up the topic of IG Auschwitz without fundamentally modifying his previous point of view³⁵. In an innovative essay, economic historian Mark Spoerer criticizes some of the views expressed in Kaienburg's volume³⁶. In particular, he subjects the widespread view of the profitability of prisoner labor in the concentration camps to close scrutiny, which is also of interest in the present work with regard to the case study of IG Auschwitz. The structure of the SS economic administration and its institutions is the focus of Walter Naasner's work³⁷. By drawing on previously little-used source material, the employee of the Federal Archives is able to provide a new and well-founded data basis for the role of the SS as an entrepreneur in particular, while his historical classification of the individual organizations of the Nazi war economy has not remained uncontroversial.

The intensive debate in Germany about Goldhagen's thesis of "Hitler's willing executioners"³⁸ was only of indirect significance for this study. Goldhagen correctly noted that the question of the motives of the "perpetrators" had not played a major role in previous research. However, this only applies in part to the writings dealing with the IG Farben industry, as GDR research in particular believed more than 20 years ago that there was a very specific, profit-oriented motivation for participation in SS crimes. Hayes and to an even greater extent Plumpe, on the other hand, emphasize the limited decision-making ability of the company management once it had decided to cooperate with the regime. This study attempts to show that the living and working conditions of the prisoners were shaped much more by individuals than by abstract goals or anonymous institutions; in this respect, the question of individual motives for action plays a decisive role. Simplifications, such as Goldhagen's replacement of the term "SS perpetrators" with the blanket term "Germans", do not offer a solution to the problem.

³² Mommsen/Grieger, Volkswagenwerk, p. 514.

³³ Cf. Kaienburg, Vernichtung.

³⁴ Cf. hes, Konzentrationslager.

³⁵ Cf. Hayes, Forced Labor; the same applies to his, Entanglement.

³⁶ Cf. Spoerer, Company.

³⁷ Cf. Naasner, Machtzentren; *ibid.*, SS-Wirtschaft.

³⁸ Cf. Goldhagen, Vollstrecker.

Like many other historians, Goldhagen uses the term "slave labour" to characterize the inhumane and only rarely economically oriented prisoner labour. Although it is a striking reference to the deplorable living and working conditions in the concentration camps³⁹, this term appears to be completely useless for the topic under investigation here: The prisoners did not perform slave labor because they were not slaves. It is true that the relationship between the inmates of a concentration camp and the SS could be compared to some extent with that between the slaves and the slave owner, insofar as the former lived in complete legal and economic dependence on the latter. However, the fundamental difference can be seen from the opposite perspective: the slave owner invested capital in human labor in order to make a financial profit from it. Although he had the right to decide on the life and death of the slave he had acquired, he only exercised this right in exceptional cases. As his main interest was profit, the slave owner usually provided his slaves with at least the necessities of life in order to achieve the highest and longest possible return on his capital.

With regard to the vast majority of prisoners at Monowitz, this is not an accurate description of the living conditions. The SS had no interest in obtaining prisoner labor; their primary goal was not financial gain. Precisely because it was ultimately about the extermination and not the economic exploitation of the Jewish prisoners, their life expectancy under the conditions of forced labor could be reduced to a few months, sometimes even weeks. To describe "extermination through labor" as slave labor is therefore an apology for the responsibility of the SS and IG.

Question and sources

On an overarching level, this work deals with the relationship between the German economy and the extermination policy of the National Socialist regime. The individual investigation of the history of IG Auschwitz and the Monowitz concentration camp contributes to the creation of the necessary empirical basis. In addition to the indispensable reconstruction of the history of the events, it also involves a detailed analysis of the background to the cooperation between the IG and the SS in Auschwitz: Why did the IG go to Auschwitz? Why did the company use concentration camp prisoners? How were they treated in the company's own camp? And how did senior employees become involved in their murder? In addition, a central question that stimulated the entire research work was how members of the German economic elite who had previously been personally blameless and initially hardly active politically were able to participate so extensively in the crimes of the SS during the course of the war. In addition, an attempt is made to reconstruct the various aspects of camp life from the prisoners' perspective into an overall picture of "everyday camp life" in Monowitz.

³⁹ In this sense, the prosecutors coined the term "slave labor" at the IG trial.

This means a certain departure from the usual approach to researching the IG Farben industry, which has primarily dealt with historical events such as the Auschwitz site issue or the relationship between the main players on the IG board and leading Nazi functionaries. For the first time, the victims, the former prisoners of the Auschwitz 111/Monowitz concentration camp, are the focus of a scholarly work. Only by focusing on those who suffered as a result of the use of prisoners can the full extent of the consequences of the cooperation between the armaments companies and the Nazi regime be grasped. This is all the more desirable as the number of survivors of Monowitz is decreasing from year to year. It was therefore a rare stroke of luck for the historian to have the opportunity to discuss the results of his work with former prisoners and check their accuracy⁴⁰.

The treatment of two very different perspectives, one focusing on the factory and the other on the camp, necessitated recourse to heterogeneous sources. For the chronological account of the establishment of IG Auschwitz, contemporary documents from the company and the various authorities involved were available. There are considerable gaps in both sources, but far fewer than was to be expected due to the attempts by the SS and IG to destroy the files at the end of the war. In some questions, the wording of the surviving sources can be interpreted quite differently. In order to minimize sources of error, an attempt was made to clarify the context of the situation described by a source as far as possible. A further safeguard was provided, for example, by using and comparing statements made by the same person at different times.

In the course of this work, it was possible to examine documents from very different provenience. Unexpectedly rich material was found in the files of the Nuremberg follow-up trials, in particular in the series marked "NI"⁴¹. It forms the basis of this study. Research in the archives of the succession
However, research into the IG Farben companies revealed that - at least as far as historians can access it - there is hardly any new material relevant to the issue at hand⁴². The Federal Archives in Berlin contain extensive material that sheds light on the bureaucratic decision-making processes that led to the establishment of IG Auschwitz and its position within the broader planning for the eastern territories. In addition to the usual personal files of SS and party members, most of which are not very productive, research at the Berlin Document Center (now also part of the Federal Archives) has yielded a wealth of material relating to the establishment of IG Auschwitz.

⁴⁰ This was possible at the meeting of the survivors of the Monowitz concentration camp in Frankfurt in October 1998.

⁴¹ The document numbers beginning with "NI" refer to material collected by the Allies for the trials of leading industrialists of the "Third Reich". The Institute of Contemporary History provided me with reprints for my research; in the meantime, only the microfilm edition is still available there.

⁴² These were the BASF company archive in Ludwigshafen, the Bayer archive in Leverkusen (BAL) and the archive of Hoechst AG in Frankfurt a.M. An inquiry in Merseburg was turned down.

The source was unexpected when it came to the subject of Auschwitz. These were the files on the Kok-Sagys rubber plant from the extensive volumes of Himmler's personal correspondence (SS-HO).

A search at the Foundation Archive of the Parties and Mass Organizations of the GDR in the Federal Archive (BA-SAPMO)⁴³ in Berlin brought to light interesting documents on the attitude of the GDR government towards the IG. The files of the Western Commission of the Central Committee of the SED, which was responsible for propaganda work "towards the West", or the "Northern Office", shed light above all on the noticeable persecution of the Frankfurt Auschwitz trials and the attempts to bring the chemical company back to court.

Material on the subject of Auschwitz that has so far been virtually inaccessible to Western historians is held in Polish archives. The archive of the state museum in Auschwitz (APMO) has a wide range of holdings (transport lists, prisoner requisitions, company lists, announcements, invoices for work performed by prisoners, correspondence between the concentration camp and IG Farbenindustrie, statements by former prisoners) for the investigation of IG Auschwitz and the Monowitz concentration camp. The location and commandant's orders of the Auschwitz concentration camp, which are being edited as part of this publication series, also provide new insights⁴⁴. The research carried out by the Main Commission for the Investigation of National Socialist Crimes in Poland (AGK) in Warsaw led to only a few usable findings. In contrast, the opening of the archives of the former Soviet Union made a fund of sources of great importance accessible. The former special archive "Osoby" in Moscow contains the files of the Central Construction Management of the SS in Auschwitz (ZBL), which represent the most comprehensive collection of files relating to the administration of the Auschwitz concentration camp.

The great willingness of the public prosecutor's office at Frankfurt am Main Regional Court to cooperate ultimately made it possible to continue the investigation and trial.

The files of the Frankfurt Auschwitz trials (1963-1965) can be viewed here. In addition to important individual documents, this collection also includes around 800 witness statements, mainly from former prisoners of the Auschwitz concentration camps. Especially on the basis of these sources, the stylization of the actors in the simple categories of perpetrators and victims, which is often found in the relevant literature, proved to be of little help in the investigation of the complex history of the development of IG Auschwitz. There is of course no question that the leadership of the Nazi state, in particular Hitler and Reichsführer SS Himmler, bore the main responsibility for the suffering and death of tens of thousands of prisoners at Monowitz. In the reality of the camp, however, the situation was often very confusing: on the one hand, there were certainly individuals in the SS ranks who stood up for prisoners (albeit mostly in return for bribes or special services). On the other hand, even prisoner functionaries sometimes went against their

⁴³ Among other things, it manages the holdings of the former Central Party Archive of the SED. All of the SAPMO's files were transferred to the Federal Archives' stacks after the move.

⁴⁴ Location and commandant's orders.

The IG's employees provided both altruistic help and sadistic abuse. There are examples of both disinterested help and sadistic abuse among the employees of the IG; one employee of the IG's "followers' department" had even previously been a prisoner of various concentration camps himself⁴⁵.

The term "Jews", which summarizes the people of many nations, languages and cultures, was adopted from contemporary sources. However, this designation is undoubtedly unsatisfactory, as it says nothing about the actual religiosity of the people and their origins. For example, it does not allow any distinction to be made between a fully assimilated Western European university teacher and an Eastern European Orthodox Jew, who could probably not have been further apart in their respective self-images. However, the Nazis' racially ideologically motivated definition of the term accurately describes the conditions of existence in the camp. The analysis of everyday life in the camp showed that the generalizing term had a formative effect on reality. More than any other characteristic, belonging to the heterogeneous group of Jews proved to be the decisive category for the quality of living conditions and chances of survival.

The extensive use of court records, especially interrogation transcripts, was associated with considerable difficulties in the evaluation. The intention of the person giving evidence had to be taken into account more than in the case of reports of experiences in order to be able to weigh the "value" of the information in question. As a rule, only those reports that could be confirmed by other sources or at least did not contradict them were included in the presentation. The case of "Buthner" proved particularly problematic in this respect, as two groups of witnesses in court diametrically contradicted each other about his role as camp elder of the infirmary; conclusions therefore had to be drawn with great caution, but this did not detract from the exemplary character of the corresponding excursus.

The description of everyday life in the Monowitz camp is inevitably based primarily on the accounts of former prisoners. This is associated with specific evaluation problems: Details fade in the memory and combine with the knowledge of other prisoners with whom one exchanges information. The further apart the experience and testimony (or written record) were, the less information was generally available. In this respect, the interrogations conducted during the Nuremberg Trial against the IG in the early post-war years were therefore the most valuable. Interrogations of former prisoners that took place in the course of preparations for the West German trials from the early 1960s onwards are already much less precise and detailed. The historical usability of these testimonies also diminishes the fact that, in contrast to the Nuremberg Tribunal, they are more narrowly focused on individual guilt. Overall, the more recent testimonies reflect the collective memory of the former prisoners to a greater extent than their personal recollections.

⁴⁵ This is Eduard v. Baarenfeld; cf. **chapter IV.4**, note 316.

neration. Not least for such reasons, the few surviving prisoners of Monowitz were largely refrained from being questioned ^{again}⁴⁶.

However, the prisoners' reports recorded shortly after the end of the war also pose considerable problems for historians. For example, it is rarely possible to establish a chronology of what was experienced, as the fixed points of chronological orientation taken for granted in freedom were generally missing in the camp. In addition, there were no experiences in Monowitz that could be generalized unquestioningly. Rather, each individual prisoner describes "his" image of the camp, depending on his nationality, his work command or the time of his incarceration. This presents the historian with the almost impossible task of forming a coherent account from the multiple perspectives, which are also highly fragmentary. Roman Frister's hope that "historians of future generations" would be able to "correctly decipher" the "complex puzzle" of the camps is therefore unlikely to be fulfilled⁴⁷.

From the fragmentary, sometimes contradictory, sometimes chronologically inconsistent reports, which are sometimes even mutually exclusive, the historian can only approximately reconstruct the "camp reality". The account therefore inevitably remains abstract in some places. Embedding the source fragments in a consistent, coherent, even vivid narrative is not possible with this subject matter. The result would inevitably be a distortion of the actual events in the camp. By emphasizing one account, the individual memories of many others would be unjustifiably devalued. The account of the events is therefore concerned not to obscure the central finding that there were also a number of "camp realities" within the Monowitz camp.

The situation is exacerbated by the fact that a central component of the camp experience is completely beyond the historian's grasp. The fact that only the survivors were able to report on Monowitz has an even greater impact on the description of Monowitz than on the camps in the old Reich. Presumably more than two thirds of the prisoners transferred to Monowitz either died there or were murdered in the gas chambers of Birkenau after the selection. Death was therefore the "usual way" out of the camp. Those who survived Monowitz and were able to report it often belonged to a preferred work detail, had been able to obtain additional food or had privileges as a prisoner functionary. The reports available to us are therefore probably not representative of the experiences of the majority of prisoners at Monowitz, but they are almost the only source of information about the conditions in the camp. Nevertheless, I have tried not to neglect the history of those murdered in or by Monowitz in addition to the testimonies of the survivors.

⁴⁶ However, the Fritz Bauer Institute in Frankfurt am Main has since begun recording the memories of former Monowitz prisoners through interviews; the initial experiences gathered in the process appear to confirm the concerns formulated above.

⁴⁷ Frister, Mütze, p. 10.

1. Background: The IG and Buna

The development of synthetic rubber up to 1918

At the end of the 1920s, researchers at IG Farbenindustrie AG (IG) called their synthetic rubber, which was obtained from butadiene using the catalyst *sodium*, "Buna". The senior managers of the chemical company and the German tire manufacturers believed that this material represented an important step towards a commercially viable competitor to natural rubber. By mid-1929, their scientists had gathered so much theoretical and practical experience in the laboratory that they began planning the first large-scale test facility. The resulting controversy between the various IG plants involved in the development about the most suitable location dragged on.

However, this did not last until the following year, which finally brought a decision of a completely different kind: a growing oversupply on the world market led to a dramatic fall in the price of natural rubber. With no concrete prospect of a synthetic product that would cover costs in the foreseeable future, this meant that work was largely halted in October 1930. As in previous decades, external economic and political events had a decisive influence on the development of synthetic rubber.

The first considerations in the German chemical industry to participate in the emerging market for rubber products with its own product date back to around 1906. The invention of the air-filled tire made of vulcanized rubber, known colloquially as rubber, by the Irishman Dunlop at the end of the 1880s opened up a wide range of applications for the material discovered five decades earlier by the American Goodyear. The expanding automotive industry in particular led to a rapid increase in demand for rubber in Germany during the first decade of the twentieth century, albeit at a slower rate than in the USA or Great Britain.

However, the increasing demand in industrialized countries was not matched by a corresponding supply at the beginning of the century. The main producer, Brazil, from which over 90 percent of rubber came at the time, was not in a position to expand its cultivation areas to the required extent in the short term. The result was a rapid rise in prices, which reached its first peak in 1906, when the price of rubber on the world market climbed by almost 50 percent in just four years despite increased production². While in the following years it was primarily British plantation owners in the tropical regions of South Asia who endeavored to expand rubber production, the issue now also attracted the attention of

¹ The description of the development history of Buna essentially follows the explanations in Plumpe, I.G. Farbenindustrie, p. 339 ff.

² In the same period, rubber production increased from 42,500 tons (1902) to 62,500 tons (1906). To On the basis of 1900 (= 100), the price rose from 85.4 (1902) to 135.7 (1906). Data according to Plumpe, I.G. Farbenindustrie, p. 341.

the attention of the chemical industry. The German dye industry in particular, which traditionally dealt with the synthesis of costly imported raw materials by chemical means, saw great market opportunities here.

In the years leading up to 1910, three German companies were working on the problem of rubber synthesis: Badische Anilin- und Sodafabrik AG (BASF), Schering and Farbenfabrikenwerke, formerly Friedr. Bayer & Co. However, only the latter, in cooperation with the tire manufacturer Conti-Gummi, brought the first car tire made of synthetic material onto the market in 1910. The FFB researchers had named the compound used, which was polymerized from dimethyl butadiene under heat and pressure, "methyl rubber". The starting materials were wood vinegar obtained naturally from wood distillation and benzene, which was extracted from the tar resulting from the coking of hard coal. However, the insufficient durability of the material, which was also difficult to vulcanize, made its use in tire production impossible. In 1912, Conti-Gummi rejected any further use of methyl rubber, no doubt under the impression that the supply of natural rubber had increased significantly in the meantime. The sales opportunities for a rubber substitute obtained from domestic raw materials, which had been considered so favorable only a few years previously, had now vanished into thin air due to the poor quality and the changed market structure. There was no longer any economic interest in further developing the product.

The situation changed fundamentally with the start of the First World War. The dependence of the German war economy on imports of raw materials became apparent within a very short time. In the unrealistic imagination of the war planners, there had obviously been no room for the necessities of modern, highly industrialized warfare; stocks of the most important imported goods had not been built up. The British naval blockade therefore proved to be a particularly effective instrument for hindering the armament of the German Reich. As a result, industry had less than a quarter of its consumption in the last year of peace at its disposal during the course of the war³.

However, the experts at the Reichsamt des Innern, which was responsible for the armaments industry, were evidently aware of the supply problems threatening the economy, at least immediately after the outbreak of war. As early as August 1914, FFB received its first inquiry about the availability of synthetic rubber. Only after the company had come to terms with the idea of a prolonged war and product improvements had been achieved elsewhere was FFB able to make an offer to the Reichsmarineamt in October 1915 to supply a modest quantity of methyl rubber. The limited capacity of the test facilities in Elberfeld led to negotiations on the construction of a larger plant in the same year. After the Prussian War Ministry's War Raw Materials Department (KRA) promised a considerable volume of orders, FFB, with the support of a private company, built a new plant in Elberfeld.

³ See Plumpe, I.G. Farbenindustrie, p. 343.

unit in Leverkusen built a new production facility with a capacity of around 800 to 1,000 tons per year. By the end of the war, the complex, lengthy and correspondingly expensive production process had delivered around 1,600 tons of methyl rubber at an average price of well over 40 RM per kilogram. This meant that the cost of synthetic rubber was several times higher than that of natural rubber, while the quality still left much to be desired and did not yet allow the production of durable car tires.

For this reason, FFB considered the production of methyl rubber beyond the duration of the war to be completely unprofitable. The management therefore rejected an expansion at its own risk. The insistence of officials in the War Ministry finally led to a contract in September 1918 for the construction of two further large production plants in Worringen on the Lower Rhine and in Spergau an der Saale, which was protected from the air. The financial risk was borne solely by the state. However, the military and political developments of the next two months prevented both projects from going ahead. Despite a certain amount of interest in the rubber processing industry, FFB ceased production completely, as sales opportunities were seen to be dwindling in the short term. Synthetic rubber was still unable to compete with its natural counterpart in terms of either quality or price. Its cost-intensive production could only be justified under the special economic conditions of a politically or militarily coercive situation. These conditions were not met in the following years.

The foundation of the IG

The structure of the German chemical industry had changed considerably during the First World War. The concentration tendencies that had been evident since the beginning of the century, mainly driven by Carl Duisberg, a member of the FFB board, now reached a new stage. Duisberg had already called for the close merger of the major chemical companies in a memorandum at the turn of the year 1903/1904 without any compelling economic necessity. At that time, these were FFB, BASF, Farbwerke Hoechst (FWH) and AG für Anilinfabrikation (Agfa). Although his plans had initially met with a positive response, the difficulties involved soon proved insurmountable, as the individual companies were unable to agree on the shareholding in the new joint venture based on turnover. A merger of the major chemical manufacturers had thus failed for the time being.

In the course of 1904, however, smaller mergers took place within the industry. In late summer, FWH, whose resistance had been the main reason for the failure of the merger, merged its capital with the much smaller Casella company. Inspired by this development, the negotiations between FFB and BASF became more concrete, from which the "small I.G." emerged on January 1, 1905 with the participation of Agfa. Three years later, the merger movement came to a provisional conclusion, resulting in two large corporate blocs: the "triple alliance" of Agfa, BASF and FFB and the "small I.G." created by the acquisition of Agfa.

The alliance of FWH and Casella also grew into a "tripartite association" following the acquisition of Kalle. The associated companies retained their independence, but coordinated their actions and shared the profits.

The First World War then led to a completely new situation, as the strongly export-oriented German paint industry now lost a large part of its sales markets. During the first year of the war, the leaders of the German chemical companies therefore agreed to join forces with the aim of regaining their pre-war position on the world market. In August 1916, the "large" community of interests was finally formed, which included Chemische Fabrik Griesheim Elektron AG (CFGE) and Chemische Fabriken, vorm. Weiler - ter Meer AG (WTM) were members. Once again, however, Duisberg's more far-reaching merger plans failed. Even now, the individual companies remained independent, although considerable decision-making powers had been transferred to a joint council. Of course, this did not result in a truly coordinated corporate policy among the chemical groups, probably also because the merger was limited to the dyestuffs business.

In the first years after the war, it quickly became apparent that the dominant world market position in this business sector had been lost. Although the German chemical companies were soon able to achieve an astonishingly high export quota again in the face of strong foreign competition, their fields of activity had changed fundamentally. The diversification of fields of activity and the legacy of the war necessitated a reorientation of Community policy. After an initially favorable business development, this became particularly clear during the hyperinflation of 1923. Massive profit losses, the dismissal of a quarter of the workforce and cuts to the company's assets necessitated extensive rationalization measures. After another lengthy period of controversy, now primarily between Duisberg and the Chairman of the Board of Executive Directors of BASF, Carl Bosch, the previously loosely affiliated companies finally merged in the fall of 1925 to form "I.G. Farbenindustrie A.G."⁴.

In the years leading up to the global economic crisis of 1929, the newly created group, referred to in the following as IG for short, developed into the second largest German company after Vereinigte Stahlwerke. It employed almost

1,55,000 people (1928) and achieved a turnover of around RM 1.7 billion (1,929)⁵. IG held a dominant position within the chemical industry in Germany. The second largest company in the industry, Kokswerke & Chemische Fabriken AG, achieved only one sixth of these figures. IG was also able to hold its own on the world market thanks to its unusually high export quota and was one of the four most important chemical companies in the world alongside the Anglo-American companies Du Pont, Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI) and Allied Chemical and Dye Corporation (ACD). During the second half of the 1920s, IG's exports amounted to almost 56 percent of its turnover, more than any other German company.

⁴ Plumpe, I.G. Farbenindustrie, p. 136 ff.

⁵ Data according to Plumpe, I.G. Farbenindustrie, p. 175 ff.

companies. The Group management was therefore very interested in liberalizing trade relations, as the domestic market was far too small to generate good returns, particularly in the profitable business areas.

IG's product range had grown considerably during this period. The company continued to produce almost all dyes manufactured in Germany, as well as more than two thirds of industrial fertilizer nitrogen. There was a monopoly for magnesium and a range of chemicals. In addition IG played a leading role in the areas of pharmaceuticals and photo chemical products⁶. The synthetic production of fuels and chewing gum was not one of the company's profitable fields of activity at the end of the 1920s.

The resumption of Buna development

Until the mid-1920s, efforts to produce or further develop synthetic rubber in significant quantities had come to a standstill. The production capacities of the rubber plantations had grown considerably and, despite increased consumption, had led to a significant reduction in import prices compared to pre-war levels. In 1922, producers even felt compelled to agree production limits in the event that the price fell below a certain level. However, this so-called Stevenson Plan was never applied, as the price was always above the intervention limit of 21 pence per pound of rubber. It was therefore suspended again in 1928 - prematurely, as the global economic crisis that soon followed would show.

Initially, however, the historical situation of 1906 seemed to be repeating itself. In the mid-1920s, the price of rubber had become unbalanced due to the sudden increase in demand from the booming automotive industry, particularly in the USA, and tripled between 1924 and 1925. Both the American chemicals group Du Pont and the recently founded IG therefore resumed their research activities in the course of 1926, presumably encouraged by considerable simplifications in the production of Buna precursors. However, unlike 20 years previously, there were no longer any illusions at the company headquarters that they would be able to compete with the cost of natural rubber in the long term. Instead, the new technology was seen as a way of meeting the needs of the market with its special product requirements in some areas better and more flexibly than the producers of natural rubber.

The leading synthesis experts from the various IG plants therefore met in Frankfurt in October 1926 to discuss how to proceed. The basis for the following developments was still provided by the knowledge and experience gained before and during the First World War in the research facilities in Elberfeld. In the meantime, however, new methods for the more efficient production of butadiene had been developed in Hoechst and Ludwigshafen. Preparations were underway at all three locations for a tech

⁶ Plumpe, I.G. Farbenindustrie, p. 177.

The company continued to implement the laboratory processes, supplemented by university research projects to clarify the fundamentals of polymer chemistry as a whole. By mid-1929, those involved believed that they had finally done enough preliminary work to set up a large-scale test facility. As mentioned, this project failed due to the development of the rubber market caused by the global economic crisis. Prices for natural rubber fell to an all-time low, far below the intervention limit of the Stevenson Plan, which had already been repealed. In October 1930, the IG management therefore decided to end all application-related work in the field of synthetic rubber. Only basic research continued at a reduced level.

Surprisingly, it was precisely in the following period that discoveries were made that were to prove decisive for the further course of Buna development. Through the mixed polymerization of butadiene with another monomeric compound, acrylonitrile, and the addition of carbon black during the vulcanization process, IG was able to present a product for the first time at the end of 1932 that was superior to natural rubber in certain respects. Buna N", as IG called the new product, proved to be more resistant and durable as a material for the tread of car tires and was also insensitive to contact with oil or solvents. However, it was still unclear how synthetic rubber would be produced on an industrial scale. In order to achieve tangible results more quickly in this area, cooperation agreements were entered into with American companies, including Standard Oil.

One of IG's competitors, the American chemical giant Du Pont, was far ahead of the German experts when it came to application technology. In the summer of 1932, the market launch of a synthetic rubber had begun which had very similar properties to Buna N. Using hydrochloric acid as a catalyst, the American researchers had developed an oil-resistant material based on monovinyl acetylene, which was soon given the brand name "Neoprene", which is still used today. Despite major advances in the manufacturing process, Du Pont's new product was also unable to compete with cheap natural rubber in terms of price and was therefore limited to special areas of application.

New framework conditions for Buna after 1933

The National Socialists' "seizure of power" in January 1933 heralded a completely new phase for the development of synthetic rubber. The Reichswehr had already inquired about IG's production possibilities at the end of 1932 in order to prepare for the rearmament of its arsenals after regaining military equality only a few months earlier. However, it was only under the new government that the Army Weapons Office made a concrete inquiry about Buna. The initial contact in May 1933 was quickly followed by further steps, with the result that the IG resumed its research activities on a large scale as early as the summer. The focus of the work was the further development of the polymerization processes that had already produced Buna N.

In August, the company and the army administration agreed to carry out the first tire tests, in which the Reichswehr and the rubber processing industry were to participate.

However, the IG's governing bodies also considered it unlikely that synthetic rubber would ever be able to compete with the natural material on a larger scale. Accordingly, the company endeavored to secure the funds invested in research financially through support from the Reich. The extensive self-sufficiency plans of the increasingly National Socialist economic administration were very much in line with this desire. The availability of a rubber substitute would have made Germany independent of raw material imports in an area that was becoming increasingly important due to motorization. The Ministry of Economics hoped that this would not only save foreign currency for other important imports, but also create new jobs in Germany, which was still suffering from severe unemployment. Economics Minister Hjalmar Schacht therefore offered to advocate the use of Buna tires for public institutions if the tire tests were successful.

However, a kind of self-sufficiency euphoria seemed to have spread among the responsible Reich offices, as the "Monitoring Center" and the "Reich commissioners for asbestos and rubber" did not take note of the actual state of development. The IG still lacked the processes for large-scale production of Buna. The production of car tires in significant quantities was therefore out of the question, partly because the rubber industry shied away from the costly processing of the synthetic material. For this reason, IG was even interested in acquiring a license for Neoprene from its major American competitor Du Pont. Perhaps misjudging reality, but possibly also out of calculation, even Schacht ignored the IG's objections and publicly announced in the fall of 1934 that the "production of synthetic rubber had been a complete success"⁷.

As a result, the IG was now under pressure to meet these political expectations in the foreseeable future. At repeated conferences over the following year, the positions of the IG and the Reichs stellen remained unchanged. The policy of the Ministry of Economics was now primarily determined by the newly appointed "Economic Commissioner of the Führer", Wilhelm Keppler. This close confidant of Hitler demanded the immediate construction of a synthesis plant with a capacity of 2,000 tons per month. The IG experts, on the other hand, refused to even begin planning such a facility until the technical feasibility had been clearly clarified. After all, they were still not sure whether there would ever really be a tire made entirely from Buna. It is noteworthy that the most far-reaching demands were initially formulated by the civil administration.

⁷ Thus Schacht before the Central German Business Conference in Weimar, 21.11.1934; quoted from Plumpe, I.G. Farbenindustrie, p. 359.

were published. The Reichswehr leadership only agreed to Keppler and Schacht's demands in the spring of 1935.

By this time at the latest, however, it must have been clear to the IG's leading men why the regime was so interested in the rapid availability of a rubber substitute. During a meeting between IG and Reich representatives in Leverkusen in March 1935, Keppler's employee Paul Pleiger stated quite unequivocally that the early production of Buna

"absolutely necessary in connection with the decided rearmament of the Reichswehr"⁸. Should the IG continue to oppose the construction of a large-scale plant, this could also be ordered by the "Führer". At this time, however, the IG's Buna experts were only in the process of setting up a polymerization plant with a capacity of 50 tonnes - just one twentieth of the volume demanded by the state.

Six months later, in September 1935, Pleiger's threat became reality: War Minister Blomberg and the head of the Army Weapons Office, Liese, now demanded the immediate construction of a large-scale test facility with a capacity of 200 to 250 metric tons. Fritz ter Meer, the IG board member responsible, pleaded for resistance to the Reich's demands to be abandoned. Although he would initially have preferred to continue developing the Buna production process on a smaller scale due to the continuing technical problems, the expert now saw hardly any valid arguments that he could have put forward against such a plant; after all, from the process engineer's point of view, this was merely a multiplication of the equipment already under construction. In order to retain as much entrepreneurial independence as possible despite the construction directive from the Reich authorities, the key figures at IG - in this case, in addition to ter Meer and Bosch, the Chairman of the Board of Management Hermann Schmitz - decided to cover the costs of around RM 10 million from their own resources. The prerequisite for this considerable financial commitment on the part of IG was not a change in economic conditions, but a purchase guarantee from the Reich for the synthetic rubber produced there. In this way the Group management tried to minimize the economic risk, while at the same time retaining entrepreneurial freedom as far as possible.

The so-called petrol contract⁹, which the company had concluded with the Reich on December 14, 1933, served as a model. This agreement had laid the foundations for the rapid further development of fuel synthesis and the generous expansion of production facilities. In it, IG agreed to triple the production of synthetic petrol by 1935. In return, the Reich undertook to supply the company with the gasoline that could not be sold on the free market. and guaranteed reimbursement of the actual production costs plus a five percent profit margin¹⁰. With

⁸ Meeting with Keppler and Pleiger, March 23, 1935; quoted from Plumpe, I.G. Farbenindustrie, p. 365.

⁹ Wording of the contract in: Nürnberg. doc. For more details on this topic, see Birkenfeld, Treibstoff, p. 24 ff.; Hayes, Industry, p. 115 ff.; Plumpe, I.G. Farbenindustrie, p. 265 ff.

¹⁰ Cf. Hayes, Industry, p. 118 f.

This agreement marked the end of the long negotiations that had begun in 1932 with the previous Reich government. On the basis of the law "on the assumption of guarantees for the expansion of the raw materials economy"¹¹, which was passed a year later but came into force retroactively from December 1, 1933, the petrol agreement defined the framework within which the self-sufficiency efforts of the Nazi regime and the economic interests of the companies could be combined¹².

Otto Ambras, a chemist who was only 35 years old and responsible for Meer, took over the management of the construction of the now financially secure Buna large-scale testing facility. The question of site selection initially proved to be an almost insurmountable problem, as the differing interests of the Reichsstellen and IG clashed. Finally, at the end of 1935, a compromise was reached that took account of both political-strategic and economic considerations. The test factory was to be built in Schkopau, not too far from the existing IG plants in Leuna. Construction work began in April 1936, but without a formal contract having been signed with the Reich Ministry of Economics. Nevertheless, it was clear that neither the IG as a raw material producer nor the Buna-processing (tire) companies were to suffer any financial disadvantages from their participation in the Buna program. The financial risk was borne by the Reichswehr, which would be primarily dependent on the artificial product in the event of a shortfall in rubber imports.

The development of Buna during the four-year plan

In the spring of 1936, tensions between the various authorities in the Nazi state concerned with economic issues were approaching their peak. Since the summer of 1935, Economics Minister Schacht and the Minister for Agriculture and Food, Richard Walter Darre, had been arguing about the Reich's import policy¹³. The decline in domestic production of agricultural products after 1933 had led to supply bottlenecks, which, in addition to poor harvests, were also due to the restrictive supply policy of the newly formed Reichsnährstand¹⁴. Due to rising world market prices, Darre had to provide additional foreign currency in mid-1935, particularly for oilseeds, in order to be able to guarantee the supply of the population to some extent. Schacht, who primarily had the needs of industry in mind, saw this as a way of restarting the economy.

¹¹ Cf. Petzina, *Autarkiepolitik*, p. 28.

¹² For a more detailed account of the complicated relationship between Nazi economic policy and corporate interests, see Hayes, *Industry*, p. 69 ff., Petzina, *Autarkiepolitik*, especially p. 24 ff., and, with restrictions, the relevant chapters in Plumpe, *I.G. Farbenindustrie*.

¹³ Cf. Petzina, *Autarkiepolitik*, p. 30 ff.

¹⁴ The Reichsnährstand, created in 1933/34 by Reich Food Minister Darre, combined all German agricultural associations and the state chambers of commerce into a single public body. The organization, under the leadership of Reichsbauernführer Darre, had a total of 16 million members in around 55,000 local farmers' associations. In addition to the central planning of production and marketing, the Reichsnährstand also dealt with ideological issues ("blood and soil" theory).

The expansion of German economic capacity, which is heavily dependent on imports, was jeopardized. However, the actual background to the dispute was the lack of a clear decision by the regime leadership on the priorities in economic policy. The increasingly rapid pace of military rearmament was in conflict with the consumer needs of the population; achieving both at the same time was beyond the capabilities of the German economy. To seemingly resolve the conflict, Hitler appointed the second man in the Nazi state, Hermann Göring, as "bread commissioner" a ¹⁵.

As a result, Schacht had to make more foreign currency available for food imports, but this only intensified the foreign trade and currency crisis. By the beginning of 1936, the industry's stocks of raw materials had fallen to an alarming level, which would soon mean restrictions on production. The supply situation for rubber in particular was so bad that the Minister of Economic Affairs expected the first shutdowns the following September. For this reason, Schacht now changed his previously rather cautious position on the issue of the production of substitute materials¹⁶. At the same time, however, as he considered a reduction in the pace of rearmament to be unavoidable, the Minister of Economics lost more and more of his standing with Hitler. His stance on the issue of producing fuel from coal also contributed to this. The enormous costs of the hydrogenation process ¹⁷ prompted Schacht to repeatedly point out the economic risks of the massive expansion of capacity. In the eyes of wartime economic planners and the military, Schacht therefore appeared to be a clear obstacle to the rearmament of the Wehrmacht. The efforts of War Minister Werner von Blomberg to limit Schacht's responsibility in this area ultimately led to Göring once again being called in to mediate.

However, instead of tackling just one part of the problem, the search was now on for a more comprehensive solution to the pressing issues of raw materials and foreign exchange policy. Although Schacht, together with Blomberg and Hanns Kerrl, the special minister also responsible for economic issues, spoke out in favor of clarification by Göring, the events that followed did not go according to the economics minister's expectations. Hoping for an industry-friendly attitude from the Aviation Minister Göring, Schacht initially approved Göring's far-reaching powers, which also gave him the right to issue instructions to the Ministry of Economics regarding the procurement of raw materials and foreign currency¹⁸. However, to Schacht's dismay, Göring used his position primarily to extend his own sphere of influence to the armaments industry. At the beginning of May 1936, he set up the "Raw Materials and Foreign Exchange Staff" (RDS), headed by Lieutenant Colonel Fritz Löb, to deal with the problems at hand. This committee also included

¹⁵ Cf. Petzina, Autarkiepolitik, p. 36.

¹⁶ Cf. Petzina, Autarkiepolitik, p. 35.

¹⁷ Hydrogenation (or liquefaction) refers to the increase in hydrogen content by which the hydrogen-rich compounds in oils were obtained from the hydrogen-neutral hydrocarbon compounds in coal. See Birkenfeld, Treibstoff, p. 14 ff.

¹⁸ Cf. Petzina, Autarkiepolitik, p. 40 f.

The company was also attended by leading figures from the business world, including Carl Krauch, a member of the IG board who was responsible for all chemical issues.

However, the agreements between IG and the Reichswehr on the further development of Buna technology remained largely unaffected by these political disputes. In the following months, Löb and his colleagues achieved a standardization and systematization of efforts to make Germany largely independent of raw material imports. Löb believed he could achieve mineral oil self-sufficiency within a year¹⁹. At the center of his plan were efforts to promote mineral oil production from domestic coal. To this end, the RDS envisaged expenditure of RM 2 billion over the next few years. In second place came the funds for the production of synthetic rubber, amounting to RM 280 million. Löb's ideas were not implemented in practical policy in this form; however, they formed the basis for the considerations of the four-year plans, which began in October 1936.

The intention to prepare Germany for a military conflict prompted Hitler to write a memorandum, probably in the second half of August 1936. In it, he set out the main features of the economic policy, which removed all of Schacht's reservations. In matters of Buna production, the unrealistic demands of the state were thus incorporated into the four-year plan. Hitler and his advisors obviously hoped to be able to achieve independence from rubber imports simply by deciding to do so at this point. Without any significant change in the question of large-scale production of synthetic rubber, the RDS confronted the IG with its plans for the near future at the beginning of October 1936. As part of the four-year plan, three large Buna plants, each with an annual capacity of 24,000 tons, were to be built in the following years. It is remarkable that such exaggerated demands continued to be formulated, even though a whole series of former IG members were active in the RDS and the resulting Office for German Raw Materials and Materials (ADRWs), including Eckell²⁰, the main representative responsible for Buna. There is no doubt that the Group continued to rely on its salaries by borrowing from the

The fact that the specialists on the IG's lists were given considerable influence on economic policy²¹. Nevertheless, this did not mean that economic planning was exclusively oriented towards the interests of the IG from then on²². Rather

¹⁹ Cf. Petzina, *Autarkiepolitik*, p. 44 f.

²⁰ Dr. Johannes Eckell had worked in the research department of the Ludwigshafen plant until 1935, before moving to the "Vermittlungsstelle W", the IG office for cooperation with the Wehrmacht, in Berlin. In 1936, Krauch recruited him to the raw materials and foreign exchange staff. Eckell subsequently held a leading position within the Four-Year Plan Authority, where he was responsible for all matters relating to Buna production, among other things. NMT, vol. 7, p. 798.

²¹ Cf. Petzina, *Autarkiepolitik*, p. 118 ff., p. 123 f.

²² The diagnosis formulated by Petzina, *Autarkiepolitik*, p. 123, of a quasi "privatized economic policy" by the IG was called into question by more recent research by Hayes, *Industry*, p. 173 and p. 175 ff. According to this, the strong personal presence of the IG in the Nazi economic apparatus did not lead to a completely one-sided favoring of the company in the allocation of orders and subsidies.

Krauch and his colleagues, in cooperation with the Group's Board of Management, tried to reduce the Nazi regime's extensive self-sufficiency efforts to a practicable level. The start of the four-year plan therefore initially changed little for the further development of the Buna project.

However, the technical progress made in the large-scale test plant in Schkopau, which had been in operation since March 1937, was so encouraging that the IG was now actually able to start planning the first factory for the production of Buna. Added to this was the positive result of the Wehrmacht's tire tests with the new material Buna S, which had become more flexible through the addition of styrene and which were completed around the same time. Apparently, these results had already become apparent somewhat earlier, as Buna-Werke GmbH Schkopau had already been founded in mid-February 1937. Endowed with a capital stock of RM 30 million by the IG, this direct subsidiary of the ammonia plant in Merseburg was to prepare the construction of the first production facility for Buna. The business was managed by the IG's chief accountant, Paul Dencker, and Otto Ambros, who had already been in charge of the technical side of the large-scale testing facility.

Although the fundamental problems of the production process had been solved, even for large quantities of synthetic rubber, the economic conditions had not changed. As expected, the production of Buna had proved to be so costly that a competitive price on the world market was not even remotely conceivable. Even to raise the enormous investment costs of almost 200 million RM, the IG managers went back on the promises made earlier by the Reich authorities. In the contract for the construction of the first Buna factory in Schkopau, the IG lawyers agreed a Reich loan of RM 90 million with the representatives of the Ministry of Economics and the Ministry of Finance. In addition, the state provided further support in the form of a guarantee for the acceptance of the entire production and a fixed price, which in any case covered the IG's production costs. The funds required for this came from a duty levied on rubber imports from then on, which was also intended to enable a competitive price for Buna in the Reich. By the end of July 1937, the IG had agreed a guaranteed price of four RM per kilogram of Buna with the Reich Commissioner for Pricing.

IG's comprehensive safeguards against the financial risks of the industrial production of synthetic rubber make it clear once again that the company had no immediate economic expectations of the product at this time. The decisive factor in IG's participation in the Buna program was the concern of IG management that the Reichsstellen, which were striving for self-sufficiency, might entrust another company with the further development of Buna. This would have meant not only losing all the development costs incurred up to that point, but also any chance of marketing the product in the future. Consequently, the company's top management tried to defend its monopoly on Buna production at all costs and to limit further development and production costs as far as possible. The Nazi regime, which was dependent on a sufficient supply of raw materials for its rearmament and war plans, was prepared to accept these subsidies, as they could be used in the short and medium term.

did not cause any effective costs in the long term. However, the German Reich was still a long way from having a sufficient supply of synthetic rubber from any available raw materials. The construction of the first production plant for Buna, decided in the summer of 1937, had a capacity of 24,000 tons per year. In the same year, however, German industry needed more than 1,00,000 tons per year for the major armaments programme assigned to it²³.

The planners in the Office for German Raw Materials and Materials had therefore already pushed for the construction of another factory before the test plant in Schkopau had even gone into operation. Due to technical concerns, but not least because of the difficulty of having to equip two plants with the necessary skilled personnel, the Group management delayed a decision in this regard. It became increasingly difficult for the IG managers to keep an eye on the company's interests in this way. The tones coming from the top levels of the government sounded increasingly gloomy for private industry. The establishment of the "Reichswerke Hermann Göring" made it all too clear to the companies that Hitler's threat to completely abolish control of the economy in the event of insufficient participation in the Four-Year Plan was a threat to the private sector. into state hands was meant^{seriously24}. The pressure on company executives to join the NSDAP had also increased more and more.

taken. A large part of the higher IG management gave in to this demand in spring 1937, unless they had already joined the party out of conviction²⁵.

Despite the government's insistence, IG succeeded in delaying its commitment to a second Buna plant until mid-February 1938, more than a year after the ADRWS's initial inquiry. Both the positive experience with the test facility in Schkopau and the progress made in the processing of Buna probably contributed significantly to the change of heart on the part of the company management. At the beginning of 1938, the technicians in Leverkusen had brought a process to application maturity with which Buna could be formed into tires and other products much more easily by means of "thermal plasticization". While the material properties of synthetic rubber had already been on a par with those of natural rubber, the expectations of the processing industry could now also be met. The sales opportunities for Buna thus increased considerably, especially as the higher price of the synthetic product did not represent a significant disadvantage in the state-controlled raw materials industry.

²³ Statistical Handbook of Germany 1949, p. 312.

²⁴ Cf. Hayes, Industry, p. 168 f.

²⁵ The entry of senior employees into the NSDAP presumably followed agreements within the company, but possibly also with party offices. This is the only way to interpret the agreed date of joining on May 1, 1937. On this day, when the ban on joining the party, which had been in force since May 1, 1933, was temporarily lifted, Otto Ambros, Heinrich Bütetisch, Carl Krauch and Friedrich ter Meer, who were later to play an important role at IG Auschwitz, joined the party. It is interesting to note that the applications for membership of the NSDAP are dated up to two years after official admission. Obviously the intention here was to feign earlier membership. BAB, Ambros personnel file, confirmation of backdating, 6.5. 1939; BAB, Bütetisch personnel file, application 5.7. 1937; BAB, Personal Krauch file, application 18.5.1937; BAB, ter Meer personnel file, application 10.5.1938.

The IG management considered the improvements in the production process to be so significant that it now changed its Buna policy. While the company managers had insisted on comprehensive state sales and price guarantees in mid-1937, they now apparently assumed that they would be able to market the synthetic rubber profitably. In order to be able to construct and operate Buna-II, as the new plant was called, entirely according to the company's ideas, the Management Board tried to limit the state's influence as much as possible. In contrast to Buna-I in Schkopau, the IG therefore wanted to finance the new plant in Hüls, not far from one of the Group's own Ruhr coal mines, privately. On the closed capital market of the German Reich, however, the Group was dependent on a loan of initially RM 50 million granted by the Reich. To secure the supply of raw materials, IG agreed to cooperate with the state mining company Hibernia, which held a 26 percent stake in the future plant. On May 9, 1938, both companies founded Chemische Werke Hüls GmbH (CWH) in Frankfurt am Main with administrative headquarters in Marl.

Just two weeks later, construction work began near Hüls. The original capacity of 15,000 tons of Buna per year was subsequently increased several times by the Reich authorities. After 30,000 tons per year in autumn 1938 and 40,000 in May 1939, the new plant was finally to supply 50,000 tons of Buna per year according to the plans from the beginning of 1941. The factory produced the first quotas of synthetic rubber from October 1940, i.e. after a construction period of just under two and a half years. IG used a new process for the production of acetylene. 7000 kilowatt electric arcs split the gases supplied by pipeline from the Scholven fuel hydrogenation plant into their constituent parts. From this, acetylene and the substances ethylene and carbon black required for refining were extracted in Hüls for the production of Buna.

As with the construction of the large-scale testing facility in Schkopau, there was a considerable delay before the official contract was signed. In March 1939, the IG subsidiary CWH and the Reich authorities agreed on the financing modalities for Buna-II. Of the estimated RM 1,40 million capital requirement, IG and Hibernia as shareholders were to provide the working capital and around a quarter of the plant investments from their own funds. The Wehr made RM 15 million available for the facilities attached to the **plant** for the production of warfare agents, while the Reich provided the remaining **RM** 80 million as a loan. In the spring of 1939, the original schedule of the four-year plan was therefore considerably behind schedule. None of the three major plants planned at the time were ready for production. Schkopau and Leverkusen together supplied not much more than five percent of the current year's rubber requirements. While Buna I and II were at least under construction, the planners at the Reichsstelle für Wirtschaftsausbau (RWA), a successor institution to the ADRWS, had not been able to persuade the IG to build a third Buna factory. On this issue, the IG and the Reichsstellen apparently reached the limits of agreement in their respective goals. While the Group's top management did not consider a further expansion of Buna capacities to be profitable, the RWA officials, who were intent on self-sufficiency, pushed for the construction of a third Buna factory.

to other factories. The economic considerations of the IG were initially even stronger than the state demands. However, the IG managers continued the negotiations on the construction of Buna-III pro forma, primarily with the aim of preventing a state-ordered license award to another company. The information that the company obtained from its former employees in the ranks of the RWA certainly contributed to the success of this stalling tactic.

The conflict of interests between Göring's Four-Year Plan authority and the IG intensified in the course of 1938. After the long years of development, which had cost the company considerable financial and human resources despite state support, the IG attempted to broaden the sales opportunities for Buna. The good contacts of ter Meers in the USA in particular were intended to enable the chemical company to use its painstakingly acquired experience in the production and processing of synthetic rubber to make a profit on the international market. Göring, on the other hand, formulated a new production target for Buna in July 1938 in the Wehr economic New Production Plan. According to this plan, IG was to build up an annual capacity of 1,20,000 tons of Buna, far more than the company believed it would ever be able to sell worldwide. In their traditional, export-oriented view, the Farben managers obviously could not or did not want to know the actual goals of the Reich's economic policy. While the four-year planners had accepted IG's international contacts up to that point, possibly because they hoped for faster development results, in the medium term they were striving to become largely independent of imports.

Now that the company management could no longer assume that it would be able to fend off the demands for another Buna factory for much longer, ter Meer tried to get the company's economic interests at least some attention in the Reich Ministry of Economics. In mid-October 1938, in a letter to the State Secretary Brinkmann, he complained about the overemphasis on military interests in the location considerations for Bu na-III²⁶. Under the impression of the Sudeten crisis supposedly solved by the Munich Agreement, ter Meer proposed an alternative to the previously favored Fürstenberg/Oder. According to him, a site near Deschowitz in Upper Silesia met the economic requirements for the plant much better due to its proximity to the rich raw material deposits there. Remarkably, however, ter Meer also put forward a completely different argument in favor of this location: From a "demographic point of view", the area would not only be suitable because of the high level of unemployment there and the availability of skilled workers of German origin; rather, after 20 years of Czech rule, a mark could also be made there. Ter Meer's letter thus makes two things clear: on the one hand, the company was deliberately demonstrating its support for the regime's expansion policy; on the other, it was pointing out the importance of planning a new industrial settlement once full employment had been achieved.

²⁶ Nümbg. doc. NI-47 17, ter Meer to Brinkmann, 11.10.1938.

the availability of labor. Both would prove to be important in the future.

Overall, the IG had lost a considerable amount of its entrepreneurial freedom after six years of Nazi rule. There had been no "rise of I.G. Farben" during the Four-Year Plan²⁷. The interests of the state and the company overlapped only partially. Although a large proportion of the staff in the Reich Office for Economic Expansion and the General Plenipotentiary for Special Issues of Chemical Production came from the ranks of IG, this did not correspond to any corresponding influence on the formulation of state economic policy. Since the Führer's decree of late summer 1936, the aim of this policy had been clear: to prepare the German economy for war. The traditional core areas of IG business, which were largely geared towards the export of goods, had to suffer as a result. On the other hand, a militarization of the IG took place, which led to a shift in business areas. The striving for self-sufficiency, especially in the important armaments raw materials fuel and rubber, increased their share of sales considerably. Nevertheless, despite the presence of personnel in the decision-making bodies, IG's share of the four-year plan expenditure was only marginally higher than the figures to be expected in view of the size of the Group.

In addition, the IG was forced to invest a large proportion of its funds in plants whose long-term profitability in peacetime was very much in doubt. Albert Speer later quite rightly spoke of a "nationalized I.G."²⁸. Within the narrow confines imposed by the state, the company management could only try to defend its interests as best it could. Fixed profit margins and controlled sales markets considerably restricted entrepreneurial freedom. If the Group wanted to maintain its prominent position within the German economy and prevent de facto nationalization, the managers had little choice but to follow the Reich's investment guidelines.

Although the IG also had economic interests in the development of synthetic rubber, the provision of the capacities demanded by the Ministry of Economics exceeded any reasonable entrepreneurial measure. As during the First World War, the state's military policy objectives once again acted as a catalyst for the production of Buna, which was intended to ensure the supply of rubber for a prolonged conflict with modern weapon systems. However, due to technical difficulties and delaying tactics geared towards the company's welfare, the high expectations of the four-year plan were not fulfilled in the first three years. When Hitler started the Second World War on September 1, 1939, only one factory for the production of Buna was ready instead of the planned three. Its annual capacity of around 25,000 tons at the time was only a third of the target. However, the non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union unexpectedly secured the rubber requirements of the German armaments industry in the short term.

²⁷ Cf. the contrary view in Petzina, *Autarkiepolitik*, p. 123.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

II. Profit and politics:

From the search for a location to the "bulwark of Germanness"

1. The road to Auschwitz

Even before the start of the Second World War, the IG had given in to the pressure from the Reich authorities to expand Buna production. As early as October 1938, IG board member ter Meer and the State Secretary in the Reich Ministry of Economics, Brinkmann, had corresponded about a possible location for a third Buna factory. They had agreed to take economic and political as well as military considerations into account¹. Over the next few months, the ideas became more and more concrete. Questions of energy supply and financing were already being discussed with the Reich Office for Economic Expansion ("Amt Krauch"), as well as possible locations and the production process to be chosen², but no decision was reached.

In the late summer of 1939, the changed political situation seems to have finally turned attention in a certain direction. Just one week after the start of the war, IG board member Georg von Schnitzler laid claim to the "utilization" of the Polish "paint factories", for which IG Farben alone considered itself competent³. At the end of September, Carl Krauch wrote to General Thomas, the Wehrmacht's leading armaments planner, about the relocation of chemical plants to the east⁴. And at the beginning of November, the Executive Board commissioned plans to establish Poland as a "new major manufacturing base for IG"⁵ – the rapid successes of the Wehrmacht had obviously made an impression on the company management. It is therefore hardly surprising that Fritz ter Meer now saw the "necessity" of building a third Buna plant in Upper Silesia. With this project, "I.G. and the Reich Office for Economic Expansion combined the idea of an economic development of the eastern region", as Otto Ambras put it in 1940⁶. After extensive preparations and an intensive search for a suitable location, the choice fell on Rattwitz, which was favored above all for its proximity to Breslau and the Upper Silesian coal regions. As a "cultural center and reservoir for workers", the neighboring capital of the Lower Silesian administrative district promised a certain attractiveness for the new plant's managers and a sufficient recruitment base for the workforce⁷.

Construction work in Rattwitz began at the beginning of 1940 and required an investment of four million RM by the middle of the year. But then, in July 1940, the

¹ Nuremberg doc. NI-4717, ter Meer to Brinkmann, 11.10.1938.

² Nuremberg doc. NI-11106, memorandum, 4.4.1939.

³ Nümbg. doc. NI-8457, von Schnitzler to Krüger, Sept. 7, 1939.

⁴ Nümbg. doc. NI-7122, Krauch to Thomas, Sept. 25, 1939.

⁵ Nuremberg doc. NI-15107, minutes of the 14th board meeting, 8.11.1939.

⁶ BAL, 4-D-Hey, file note Ambros, 10.7.1940, p. 1.

⁷ Nuremberg doc. NI-14283, Biedenkopf statement, 11.11.1946, p. 1.

Both the economic and strategic production requirements for the construction decision had changed fundamentally. As the engineer in charge of the Buna plant in Schkopau, Wilhelm Biedenkopf, later reported, the interest of the "Berlin authorities" in expanding Buna production had "died out" after the end of the campaign in France⁸. However, the quick victory over France also had an impact on the geostrategic objectives of the company management. The colonial empire that was now expected in the near future would, it was believed, soon make Buna production completely superfluous or at least uneconomical in the long term⁹. In a memorandum "On the postponement of the Breslau construction project", Otto Ambros considered it appropriate to at least "pause for breath" in the rapid expansion of Buna production capacities after the "tremendous successes of the German Wehrmacht" ¹⁰. He agreed with Krauch's view, "that the Four-Year Plan had successfully fulfilled its military task". Ambros went on to say that it was now important to ensure that the investments made in the Four-Year Plan would also be maintained in the coming peacetime economy.

In view of the tight raw material situation even at this time, an expansion of the Buna production facilities therefore seemed impractical. As the domestic market for Buna, which was cut off from free competition, was already fully supplied by the production of the two IG plants in Hüls and Schkopau by mid-1940, there was also no economic incentive to expand production, as the price of Buna was still twice as high as that of natural rubber¹¹. Despite the considerable investments already made in Rattwitz, the IG therefore decided to shut down construction, especially as the coal base in particular was considered too unfavorable after a new review ¹². From the On July 8, 1 940, the exploration work in Rattwitz was completed and work began on transferring the workforce to other construction sites. However, depending on political and technical developments, Ambros expressly spoke of the possibility of "resuming the Wroclaw-Rattwitz project" ¹³.

However, the course of the war soon overtook these considerations. The failure of the air offensive over England in the fall of 1 940 made a long war increasingly likely. As a result, the production of Buna became more important again. While the IG Farben managers wanted to realize a cost-effective, rapid and material-saving expansion of the existing plants from a purely economic point of view, military concerns were in the foreground on the Reich side. Possibly already in anticipation of an air war over Germany, the Reich authorities involved, the High Command of the Army and the Reich Ministry of Economics (**RWM**), wanted to realize a spatial and economic expansion.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Nuremberg doc. NI-8842, memorandum on Buna production 1 940/4 1, 12. 12. 1941; see also Hayes, Industry, S. 348.

¹⁰ BAL, 4-D-Hey, file note Ambros, 1 0.7. 1 940, p. 1 ff.

¹¹ The two factories had reached an annual production of 1 1 5,000 tons; the price per kilo in production was RM 2; see Hayes, Industry, p. 348.

¹² Nuremberg doc. NI- 14283, Biedenkopf testimony, 11 1 1.1 946, p. 1.

¹³ BAL, 4-D-Hey, file note Ambros, 1 0.7. 1 940, p. 4.

less concentrated production. The negotiations between the Reich authorities and the IG finally led to an agreement on November 2, 1940 to expand the Buna plants to a total of 150,000 tons per year. To this end, a production capacity of 25,000 tons per year (tpa) was to be built up in the existing plant in Ludwigshafen and "in a new eastern plant to be built in Silesia"¹⁴.

Site search order

With this fundamental decision, which the IG board members Friedrich ter Meer and Otto Ambros finally received in writing from the Reich Ministry of Economics on November 8, 1940, the way was clear for the planning and preparations that were to lead to the construction of IG Auschwitz from 1941. However, the future construction site near the former Polish garrison town of Auschwitz was not yet known in November 1940. In fact, the IG was only now beginning to search for a suitable location¹⁵.

By reaching an agreement with the state economic planners, the IG had achieved a partial success: The company was given the opportunity to build a third Buna plant at the logistically advantageous location of Ludwigshafen. On the other hand, it was unable to push through its demand to replace the fourth plant in the incorporated eastern territories desired by the Reich with a plant expansion in Hüls, which would have required only a fraction of the investment sum¹⁶. The IG succeeded in limiting the additional expenditure by restricting the production of Buna-IV to 30,000 tons per year – instead of the 60,000 tons per year planned for Rattwitz. Overall, however, the company was extremely dissatisfied with the Reich Ministry of Economics' decision to build the fourth Buna plant in Silesia, which was better protected from air raids. In fact, all economic arguments against the construction of a new plant in this relatively undeveloped region in terms of infrastructure¹⁷.

In an internal memo on the location issue, ter Meer repeated at the beginning of February 1, 1941, the reasons for the IG's rejection were reiterated: A completely new plant in the east would be too expensive due to its investment costs¹⁸, but also due to the "expected purchase price" represents a considerable financial "burden". At the same time, he once again made it unmistakably clear that the IG was "tasked" with finding a suitable location in Silesia¹⁹.

¹⁴ Nümbg. doc. NI-11781, meeting at the RWM, 21.11.1940.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Nümbg. doc. NI-11112, file note ter Meer, 6.2.1941. See also chapter IV, note 324.

¹⁷ It is not clear from the sources that "I.G. had once again prevailed in the location issue", "also with regard to Upper Silesia", as Karl-Heinz Roth, I.G. Auschwitz, p. 80, puts it. Although Roth is undoubtedly correct in assuming that IG Farben pursued more far-reaching interests in Upper Silesia, which was rich in raw materials, his judgment on the question of the choice of location for the fourth Buna plant cannot be accepted.

¹⁸ These were estimated by Otto Ambros to be about three times as high as an expansion of the plant in Hüls with the same production volume. Nümbg. doc. NI-11784, meeting, 18.11.1941, in Ludwigshafen.

¹⁹ Nümbg. doc. NI-11112, file note on a meeting at the RWM, 6.2.1941.

concrete counterarguments of the IG from mid-October 1940 suggest the conclusion, that an at least provisional decision in favor of a location in Silesia had apparently already been made at this point. The "candidates" Norway and Austria²⁰, which were also initially included in the discussion, appear to have been ruled out in advance. Despite the extensive coal reserves, the long transportation routes clearly spoke against Norway. In addition, a Buna plant located so far north would have been difficult to fit into the overall concept of the Reich authorities' far-reaching plans for the colonization programme in the east²¹. Austrian sites were probably also not central enough in terms of transportation and too far away from large deposits of raw materials. Although Austria was no longer mentioned in the construction contract from the beginning of November, this information seems to have been treated confidentially. At the end of December, in response to an inquiry from Semperit, the IG had to clarify that the new Buna plant would definitely not be built in the "Ostmark"²².

The fact that the IG did not take more decisive defensive measures against an economically The decision to locate the factory in Silesia, which made little sense in terms of the war economy in view of the higher costs involved, was probably due to their desire to maintain their monopoly on the production of Buna. However, this was only possible, or so it was believed, if the company behaved well towards the Reich authorities. In addition, the Management Board probably hoped that the higher investment sums would be offset by subsidies from the state coffers²³. Whether the long-term market prospects for Buna in the East had already played a role at this time cannot be clearly determined, but seems rather unlikely²⁴. In any case, the IG's approval of the construction of the fourth Buna plant in Silesia was primarily a concession to the Reich government - and not the result of long-term economic considerations²⁵.

²⁰ These are mentioned, for example, by Camill Santo, head of the IG-Bau department in Ludwigshafen. Nuremberg doc. NI-9820, Santo statement, March 1, 1947, p. I.

²¹ The description of Norway as an alternative location in Borkin, IG Farben, p. 1 08 f., is not comprehensible - especially according to the sources he cites - since the word Norway is not even mentioned there, but rather only locations in Silesia are mentioned.

²² Nuremberg doc. NI-8920, memorandum of a meeting between IG and Semperit representatives, December 21, 1940.

²³ This will be discussed further below, cf. chapter III, 1.

²⁴ See also Plumpe, I.G. Farbenindustrie, p. 379.

²⁵ Cf. also the cogent view of Hayes, Industry, p. 348 f. against Roth, IG Auschwitz, p. 80 f. Plumpe, I.G. Farbenindustrie, p. 379, does not comment on the question of IG Farben's position on the Hüls - Silesia alternative, but confines himself to describing the chronological sequence of events.

Location alternatives

By November 1 1940, it was already clear that the fourth Buna plant would be built in Silesia. Soon afterwards, the IG sent a group of industrial construction specialists to Silesia to investigate possible sites, particularly with regard to their coal reserves.

supply. The IG employees met experts from Mineralöl bau-Gesellschaft²⁶, which held a meeting in Katowice on December 10 to discuss two possible construction sites for hydrogenation plants. One of the alternative locations discussed there was an extensive and flat area between the towns of Auschwitz and Monowitz²⁷.

However, the IG initially focused on the site near Rattwitz, which had only been abandoned a few months previously. This was also the first place Otto Ambros visited when he arrived in Silesia in mid-December on a tour²⁸. Having been entrusted with the project by the Executive Board, he obviously wanted to see the potential sites in person. Two of his employees, Erich Mach and Kurt Eisfeld, accompanied him on the four-day trip. In their report, they listed the reasons that continued to speak in favor of Rattwitz, including the "absolutely flood-free location", the sufficient water supply and the "almost unlimited expansion possibilities". In addition, the authors of the report still saw Breslau as a sufficient reservoir of labour, which could be supplemented by a nearby prisoner-of-war camp and a Todt organization camp. On the other hand, Ambros' colleagues recognized the "greatest disadvantage" as "naturally always the high freight load of the bulk goods coal and lime".

The exploratory delegation therefore visited other areas, all of which had considerable disadvantages compared to Rattwitz: The areas near Groschowitz, for example, were very uneven, difficult to develop, unfavorable in terms of traffic and in some cases already owned by other companies. The Emilienhof near Gogolin, which was easy to supply with lime and coal, was not suitable due to the inadequate water supply, the lack of workers and the complicated ownership of the land.

A site near Groß-Döbern was plagued by similar problems and was also at risk of flooding. Discussions with employees of the industrial companies located in this area reinforced the negative impressions. The Odertalkokerei was neither able to provide coke and gas, nor was it possible to

²⁶ This was the Mineralölbau-Gesellschaft mbH, which received the Reich funds to promote the expansion of the synthetic fuel plants; see Petzina, *Autarkiepolitik*, p. 130; also Roth, *I.G. Auschwitz*, p. 81, which describes the "Mineralölbau-Gesellschaft mbH" as a holding company of IG. The actual task of the Mineralölbau-Gesellschaft was to "build plants for the production of fuels from domestic raw materials". It was responsible for the "construction of the entire plant and the design of the individual production facilities". It was also responsible for the construction management of the plant site. BAB, R 81 28/A 3389, Annual Report of Mineralölbau-Gesellschaft mbH, 17.1.1938, S. 2.

²⁷ Nuremberg doc. NI-1 1783, meeting of the Mineralölbau-Gesellschaft, 10.12.1940.

²⁸ Nuremberg doc. NI-1 1110, report on a trip to Silesia to examine the factory sites under consideration for Buna IV on February 15-18, 1940 [report on the first trip to Silesia]; then also the following information and quotations.

The labor issue had to be addressed, as it was foreseeable that the plants under construction in Heydebreck and Blechhammer would tie up all the workers and drive up wage levels. Senior executives in the chemical industry also confirmed the difficulties associated with the Emilienhof site. Furthermore, the site, which was used as an airfield at the time, could not have been acquired anyway. However, according to Mach and Eisfeld, "the main disadvantage" of this site was "that it was far away from any town, so that the procurement and accommodation of workers and employees would be extremely difficult".

As a conclusion, their report then also emphasized the conclusion of the general manager of the cement factory, who had said that the "Rattwitz site was the most favorable, above all because of job creation and worker quality". However, the two IG employees still seem to have based their assessment on the evaluation that had applied at the time of the start of construction. Otto Ambros later cited the lack of workers as one of the reasons for the closure of the construction site in Rattwitz. In the winter of 1940/41, these had already been absorbed by the establishment or expansion of four other large companies. According to Ambros' recollection, the Borsig and Krupp locomotive factories, among others, had settled there. In his estimation, this meant that the transport links, the labor market and all other facilities necessary for the construction of a large factory were already more than fully utilized²⁹. Despite these restrictions, Rattwitz appears to have been the most promising location for the fourth Buna plant - at least until December 28, 1940. According to the travel report, no other location could guarantee a better supply of labor³⁰.

²⁹ NMT, vol. 8, p. 734, Ambros' testimony during the trial.

³⁰ In any case, Roth's opinion that "Rattwitz was no longer under discussion" does not appear to be tenable in any way, since he also only refers to Nümbg. doc. NI-1 11 10; cf. Roth, I.G. Auschwitz, p. 81. Moreover, in a meeting with the District President in Breslau on January 20, 1941, Chief Engineer Santo described the exploratory phase of the Rattwitz site as not yet complete. Nümbg. doc. NI-11785, memorandum on the meeting with the regional planning department in Katowice, 31. 1. 1941, p. 1.

Ambros must have learned about the area near Auschwitz in mid-December 1940. There is no archival evidence of the exact date, but it must have been between December 19 and 23³¹. For if he had learned of this while still traveling through Silesia, he would most likely have taken note of this possible location himself. In any case, on December 23, 1940, Ambros asked the citizen

The mayor of Auschwitz requested general information about the construction site and the inhabitants of the area. In view of the very short and not very detailed reply, the request cannot have been very specific³². Ambros must have been following a tip-off, probably received verbally, as excerpts from the aforementioned meeting report of December 10, 1940 only came into his possession after a meeting with representatives of the Mine Oil Construction Company on January 10, 1941³³. The events of the following weeks suggest that the Buna experts at IG seized this site by eliminating their competitors³⁴.

³¹ In the report on the meeting, Nuremberg Doc. NI- 1 1784, 16. 1. 1941, p. 1a, the IG claims to have determined the favorable conditions of the Auschwitz site by studying maps. It was only after the advantages of this site had become clear that Director Simmat became aware of the explorations already underway by the Mineralölbau-Gesellschaft. This version seems to be the product of a sophisticated negotiating tactic on the part of the IG, which aimed to obtain the building site for its own purposes. Indeed, one would think that a large planning department such as that of the IG should have completed the map study before the inspection trips began. However, as we have seen, Auschwitz was not on the list of sites to be visited during Otto Ambros' trip to Silesia. Accordingly, it can be assumed that the above version only served to somewhat conceal the "parasitic" behavior of the IG in securing for its own purposes a construction site that had been scouted by another company, and a reading of the minutes of the negotiations (cf. NMT, vol. 8, p. 734 f.) also casts doubt on the credibility of the IG on this point. When asked how he had chosen the Auschwitz site, whether by traveling or in some other way, Ambros replied: „First of all, I began to investigate a lot of documents and maps in the construction office in order to study the terrain in Silesia." This obviously seems to have been Ambros' first step, which must therefore have taken place before his reconnaissance trip to Silesia from December 15-18, 1940. Although Ambros gave the impression in the trial that he had come across Auschwitz during this map study, he did not visit this place at the time. If he had indeed taken all the advantages of the location from the maps alone, this circumstance seems very strange. The contradictions are resolved if one assumes that Ambros did not become aware of Auschwitz before his journey. Yet another aspect indicates that Ambros had no knowledge of Auschwitz at the time of the first journey. When asked what he did after reading the map, he said: "When I saw that everything was united there that we needed to build the plant, I wanted to ascertain whether my assumption corresponded to reality and I wrote straight to the mayor's office." However, this only happened on 23. 12. 1940 (Ambros-Exhibit 75), i.e. long after the review of the map material should have been completed and five days after his return from the reconnaissance trip through Silesia.

³² Nuremberg Document, Case VI, Ambros Exhibit 75; reply letter from the mayor, 9.1. 1941. There are no indications from the exchange of letters that point to a preliminary decision in favor of Auschwitz that had already been made at this time, as Roth, I.G. Auschwitz, p. 81, assumes.

³³ Nuremberg doc. NI- 1 1783, cover letter and excerpts from the meeting report, 10. 12. 1940, concerning the construction site for 2 new hydrogenation plants. The accompanying letter is probably from Dr. Krönig. Nuremberg doc. NI- 11784, report, 18.1.1941, p. 3a.

³⁴ Cf. note 31.

The Auschwitz site

The aforementioned report described the area to the east of Auschwitz as an "excellent site of about 5 km² area", capable of expansion and well supplied with water and coal³⁵. The experts at the Mineralölbau-Gesellschaft estimated that up to 8,500 tons of coal could be extracted per day from the two shafts owned by the Hermann-Gö ring-Werke, Brzeszcze and Jawiszowitz, as well as from the Silesia shaft near Dzieditz. This would have covered the entire requirements of the fuel plant. At that time, there was still no information available on the suitability of coal for hydrogenation; tests were to be carried out in Ludwigshafen. On the other hand, the mineral oil experts had already identified accommodation options for the construction and operating personnel, as "at present this place was still being used as a Jewish reservoir", but "when construction work began, the evacuation of most of the inhabitants could be expected in view of population policy efforts". The Auschwitz site therefore seemed to meet the requirements "in every respect".

These key figures also seem to have quickly convinced Ambros. Just five days after receiving the report, he met with managers from "Schlesien-Benzin"³⁶ to negotiate possible joint use³⁷. At this meeting, the IG now announced that "Breslau, which had been discussed earlier, would not be taken up again" as the location for Buna-IV, "as the distance to the coal was too great". Only now, therefore, after Ambras had become aware of the advantages of the site near Auschwitz, did IG Rattwitz actually shelve it; until then there had been no better alternative.

While the meeting report of 11 . While the meeting report of December 10, 1 940, which had been available to the IG since January 11, 1 941, mainly dealt with raw material-related issues, Ambros' negotiating team was now able to benefit from the additional findings that had been made by the employees of Schlesien-Benzin in mid-January. Its director, Josenhans, had already inspected the prospective construction site himself and now delivered a report which, in addition to the logistical advantages also gave a first impression of the current living conditions in Auschwitz³⁸ : While Josenhans considered the water supply to be sufficient, he also praised the flood-proof and level location of the unwooded area, which offered sufficient space for Buna and hydrogenation plants. The site also made "an excellent impression" due to the favorable location of the railroad line. However, this positive assessment related exclusively to the suitability for construction. The purely agricultural area around Auschwitz was located in the "unsightly" part of Upper Silesia.

The inhabitants of Auschwitz, especially the children, make a very poor impression. Apart from the large market square, the town looks very poor.

³⁵ Here and in the following: Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 1783, meeting report, 1 0.1 2.1940, p. 2 ff.

³⁶ Schlesien-Benzin was to build the synthetic fuel plant with financial support from Mineralölbau GmbH.

³⁷ Nuremberg doc. NI-11784, report, 18.1.1941, p. 1, regarding the discussion of 1 6.1.1 941 in "Lu I" about the possibilities of cooperation between Buna and Schlesien-Benzin in Auschwitz.

³⁸ Ibid, p. 2 f.

miserable impression." In the event of the industrial settlement, the 7,000 Poles and 4,000 Jews living there "would be expelled from the total population of 13,000, so that the town would then be available for the factory's workforce. For this reason, it will not be necessary to build a lot of housing, at least at the beginning, since it should be possible to rebuild the existing housing at least to a certain extent. A concentration camp for Jews and Poles is being built in the immediate vicinity of Auschwitz."

"Culturally and in terms of civilization", the head of Schlesien-Benzin found this region "naturally completely undeveloped. So every German who comes there is a colonist."

As would later become apparent, the IG managers shared this view. Initially, however, the purely economic location factors still took precedence over the colonization ideas. According to Josenhans, Auschwitz did indeed have a combination of geographical, raw material and strategic transport allocation conditions that set it apart from all the other locations investigated by the IG up to that point. This conviction is now also likely to have prevailed at the company headquarters in Frankfurt am Main and led to a preliminary decision in favor of Auschwitz in mid-January 1941³⁹. From then on, further information about the construction site was obtained within a very short space of time and very targeted negotiations were conducted, which ousted Josenhans' company and soon made IG the sole investor in Auschwitz.

Experts from the IG then traveled to Silesia once again. On January 31, Chief Engineer Camill Santo had a meeting with representatives of the Land Planning Authority in Katowice. They had already been informed of the clear "intention to build a fourth Buna plant in the Auschwitz area"⁴⁰. Although the regional planners in Katowice were obviously still assuming that the hydrogenation plants would be located there, they readily provided information on the possibilities for improving and expanding transportation by "eliminating the village of Monowice" and on the conditions for procuring construction and operating materials. The question of labor procurement and the associated resettlement measures was also discussed; among other things, the concentration camp in Auschwitz, which had already been opened in May 1940, was mentioned. Santo found out that the Reich Commissioner for the Consolidation of German Nationality (**RKF**) was responsible for both the implementation of the resettlement and the administration of the site, and that he was therefore also responsible for deciding on any sale. The state planners thus referred him to the man who was to prove to be a central figure in the development of Buna-IV at the Auschwitz site: Reichsführer SS (RFSS) Heinrich Himmler.

Equipped with this new knowledge, Ambros set off on a sightseeing trip at the beginning of February 1941. His 4-day stay in Auschwitz proved

³⁹ Not in December 1940, as Roth, I.G. Auschwitz, p. 81, claims. Plumpe, I.G. Farbenindustrie, p. 380, seems to be the originator of this thesis.

⁴⁰ Here and for the following quotations: Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 1785, report on the meeting with the regional planning office in Katowice. 31.1.1941, S. 2-4.

brought further - and now finally accurate - data, particularly on the water supply⁴¹. Concrete alternative routes were even discussed for the railroad connection and detailed conversion and expansion plans were considered for cooperation with the nearby Fürstengrube coal mine. All in all, there was probably enough information available to support the establishment of the plant in Auschwitz. With one caveat, however: "The prerequisite for the implementation of the construction project is first and foremost the clarification of labor deployment and resettlement"⁴². The central question at the beginning of February 1941 thus seemed to be how to procure sufficient labor for the Buna plant in Auschwitz. The wording suggests that a positive answer to this question was necessary for a final decision on the location.

Workforce as a location factor

The previous course of the search for a location made it clear just how important the issue of labor was for a large factory settlement: Rattwitz had been shut down only months earlier due to a lack of workers, among other things, and the potential location of Emilienhof had not been pursued for the same reason. For Otto Ambros, who was in charge of the site search, this issue was of considerable importance. He therefore had the regional planners show him a map of Upper Silesia, which showed that the region around Auschwitz was one of the most densely populated. The town itself, in particular, seemed ideally suited to Ambros because some of its inhabitants were employed in industry, while others worked on their own farms. From a sociological point of view, Ambros later said in Nuremberg, workers with little property of their own were the best possible workforce for an industrial operation⁴³.

In addition, Ambros wanted to bring Upper Silesians and Poles who were already working in the old Reich back to their homeland to work in the new factory. In court, he tried to create the impression that this seemed to provide him with a sufficient manpower base for the construction of the Buna plant at the time. However, this retrospective interpretation contradicts the information he provided in December 1940, because at the end of the report on the first inspection tour, it was stated about the population, which Ambros described as ideal a few years later: "With regard to the labor question, Dir. Ebert said that the Upper Silesian was far inferior to the Central and West German worker in his work performance. Given his great lack of need, he has no interest in increasing his earnings by improving his performance."⁴⁴ In 1941, Ambros seemed to share this view. In any case, the report on his second trip to Silesia noted under point five "Labor input": "The ethnic composition is very poor. A total of only 2,000 ethnic Germans are supposed to be there, of whom only a few

⁴¹ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 1782, Report on a tour of the Auschwitz site, 4.2. 1941, pp. 1-3.

⁴² Ibid., p. 6a.

⁴³ Here and in the following: NMT, vol. 8, p. 738, trial testimony of Ambros.

⁴⁴ Nümbg. doc. NI-11110, Report on the first trip to Silesia, 18.12. 1940, p. 7.

German-speaking people in Poland. [...] The work performance of the Poles is described by all the technical authorities as very poor. [...] The town of Auschwitz and the villages make a very dirty and neglected impression."⁴⁵

In February 1941 it was therefore clear, contrary to Ambras' later statement, that the local population would not be able to make too great a contribution to the desired rapid construction progress in the future either. The decision in favor of Auschwitz could therefore only have been made on the condition that there were concrete prospects of other sources of labor. Indications of this were already contained in the first detailed information Ambras had received about Auschwitz as a possible building site. In the aforementioned extract from the Mineralölbau GmbH meeting, which he had received on 11 January 1941, it had stated that "at the start of the construction work, the evacuation of the majority of the inhabitants was planned in view of population policy efforts.

⁴⁶. This referred to the planned "Germanization" of the one-man industry. the eastern territories by expelling Poles to the Generalgouvernement and resettling ethnic Germans⁴⁷. Even if this naturally offered the opportunity to use existing living space for IG's senior employees after an appropriate conversion⁴⁸, Ambros considered the deportation of potential workers to be "irrational"⁴⁹. Relocation on a large scale would undoubtedly have greatly delayed the availability of workers and thus the start of construction, which inevitably came into conflict with his striving for the greatest possible efficiency.

Moreover, Ambros was not alone in his rejection of a global resettlement of the "non-German" population. At the end of January 1941, he and his staff were given the suggestion to "hold back" the Poles and Jews to be resettled from Auschwitz for the construction of the Buna plant. This is documented for the first time in a report dated 31 January, in which Chief Engineer Santo summarized the results of his trip to the Upper Silesia. Among other things, he mentioned a meeting with representatives of the regional planning authority in Katowice. The officials, who were familiar with local conditions, had suggested to him that "parts of the Polish population should be held back for the construction period [...] due to negotiations with the Reich Commissioner"⁵⁰. The regional president in Katowice seemed to be of this opinion. Ambras' travel report refers to his suggestion that "the best forces" should be "harnessed" for the construction work "when the Poles are resettled"⁵¹. This possibility must at least have been

⁴⁵ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 1782, Report on the tour of the Auschwitz site, 4.2. 1941, p. 5a f.

⁴⁶ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 1783, meeting report, 10.1 2. 1940, p. 3.

⁴⁷ Cf. Broszat, Polenpolitik.

⁴⁸ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 1783, meeting report, 10.12. 1940, p. 3.

⁴⁹ NMT, vol. 8, p. 738: "I was also told that it was intended to evacuate these people and I considered that irrational."

⁵⁰ Nümbg. doc. NI-11785, memorandum on the meeting with the regional planning department in Katowice, January 31, 1941, S. 3.

⁵¹ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 1782, Report on a tour of the Auschwitz site, February 4, 1941, p. 6.

had already been aware of this a few days earlier, because his colleague Faust⁵² had already reported something similar to him on January 25, 1941. January 1941

from a meeting at the Gleiwitz waterworks office: "In the opinion of the clerk, Poles and Jews could be considered as laborers despite the imminent resettlement."⁵³

This formulation deserves closer attention, as it shows the complicated situation in which the IG managers now found themselves and at the same time hints at a solution. Although a possible new source of labor had opened up for Ambros in the meantime, there was now a threat of a collision with other IG interests. On the one hand, the IG supported the resettlement of Jews and Poles, as it hoped to preserve the vacated living space for its workforce and construction personnel. On the other

hand, however, the company wanted to use the deportees as workers, at least during the construction phase⁵⁴. The problem was therefore, in abbreviated form,

exactly as the officials at the waterways authority had formulated it:

Labor force **despite** resettlement.

If the Poles and Jews living in the city were not to remain in their homes, alternative accommodation had to be found for them. The possible solution to the dilemma had been known to the IG managers for two weeks. In the meeting with Director Josenhans of Schlesien-Benzin, they had already learned where the majority of the local population would be housed according to the SS plans: "A concentration camp is being built for the Jews and Poles in the immediate vicinity of Auschwitz."⁵⁵ By this time, at the beginning of February 1941 at the latest, it must have been clear to the IG representatives that the employment of Poles and Jews from the area around Auschwitz would mean the employment of concentration camp prisoners. The immediacy of this connection becomes clear when Santo's above-mentioned report of January 31 is referred to again: Having established in it the need to keep the local population back in place, he had logically continued: "The existing concentration camp [...] is to be enlarged. Possibility of employing prisoners in the construction project after negotiations with the Reichsführer SS."⁵⁶ Otto Ambros must have realized from this that the Auschwitz concentration camp, which was currently under construction, could provide him with a further source of manpower if he succeeded in gaining Heinrich Himmler's support. All those involved with Buna IV were in fact aware of this idea. Gustav Murr, who was to go to Auschwitz as an architect, later reported on his preparations for the new task: "At a second meeting on

⁵² Chief engineer Max Faust was site manager in Rattwitz, then in Dyhernfurth and from August 1 1941 in Auschwitz.

⁵³ Nuremberg doc. NI- 1 5258, Faust to Santo, January 25, 1 1941, p. 5.

⁵⁴ This was all the more so as Ambros was unsure whether "repatriated ethnic Germans could be settled there so early" that "they could already be used for reconstruction". Nuremberg doc. NI- 1 1782, Report on the tour of the Auschwitz site, 4.2. 1 1941, p. 6.

⁵⁵ Nuremberg Doc. NI-1 1 784, Josenhans report, Jan. 16, 1941, p. 3.

⁵⁶ Nuremberg doc. NI-1 1785, memorandum on the meeting with the regional planning department in Katowice, 3 1. 1. 1 1941, S. 3.

February 18, 1941, Auschwitz was mentioned to me and that there were 8,000 Jews and 3,000 Poles there. I.G. expected to be able to use these people in the construction of its 4th Buna plant."⁵⁷

A few years later, the question of who knew how much about the concentration camp at what point in time was to gain considerable importance. Let us therefore recapitulate how Auschwitz became the favorite for the location of Buna-IV: Otto Ambros had become aware of Auschwitz in mid-December and had written to the mayor there on December 23, 1940. One day after the very brief reply, on January 10, 1941, following a meeting with the Mineralölbau-Gesellschaft, he received their report on the Auschwitz construction site dated December 10, 1940. The director of Schlesien-Benzin, Josenhans, was able to verbally supplement this information on January 16 from his own experience. Shortly afterwards, IG-Ingenieur Faust must have gone on an inspection tour, because on January 25 he reported to Chief Engineer Santo about the concentration camp and the impending resettlement. He did this in two forms:

on the one hand in a written report, on the other in a long-distance call with Santo, about which a file note was made⁵⁸.

All this information was apparently available at the meeting of the IG's Commission "K", which dealt with commercial issues, on January 30, 1941. In any case, the minutes of the meeting recorded the known problems with the workforce, but also gave an indication of a possible solution: "The conditions for the deployment of labor are more difficult. Close cooperation with the Reichskommissar für die Festigung des deutschen Volkstums will be necessary for the procurement of labor. Major expenditure will also be necessary for settlement buildings."⁵⁹ There is no mention of a definitive decision in favor of Auschwitz in this

Protocol still no trace. Ambros' report on his subsequent trip to Poland also does not sound as if a final decision had already been made⁶⁰. Thus, all sources indicate that the decision in favor of Auschwitz was only made after Ambros' return from Upper Silesia and in full knowledge of the possible cooperation with the Auschwitz concentration camp.

The initiative to deploy prisoners

On February 6, 1941, two days after Otto Ambros' return from Auschwitz, he and Fritz ter Meer met with Carl Krauch in Berlin. Ambros described the advantages of the Auschwitz site and argued strongly in favor of the construction of the fourth Buna plant there, as this site was likely to be suitable in terms of energy technology and with regard to expansion facilities for ancillary processes.

⁵⁷ Nümbg. doc. NI- I 1643, Murr statement, 25.9.1947, p. 1.

⁵⁸ Nümbg. doc, Case VI, Ambros Exhibit 77, memorandum to the telephone call of January 25, 1941.

⁵⁹ Nümbg. doc, Case VI, Ambros Exhibit 79, 5th meeting of Commission "K", January 30, 1941, p. 9 f.

⁶⁰ Nümbg. doc. NI- I 1782, Report on the tour of the Auschwitz site, 4.2.1941, passim.

would certainly be cheaper than locations in Norway⁶¹. Ambros' lecture, like his travel report, ended with the statement: "The only difficulty in Auschwitz is the question of procuring suitable labor"⁶². In a form of expression that must have made it very clear to Krauch what the IG expected in this matter, Ambros continued, "it will be unavoidable to pursue a settlement policy there on a larger scale in order to make German workers at Auschwitz at home". The wording did not mention the consequences of such a settlement policy, namely the resettlement of the local population and their transfer to the concentration camp.

tration camp Auschwitz, in a telling way from⁶³. Krauch followed the view of the two IG board members⁶⁴ and "determined" the Auschwitz site for Buna-IV⁶⁵ in the same meeting. He also promised to postpone Schlesien-Benzin's plans to build a fuel hydrogenation plant there. The decision in favor of the Auschwitz site was thus made. The conversation ended with the mutually agreed intention⁶⁶ "to contact Reichsführer SS Himmler about the settlement of German labor in Auschwitz".

Himmler had thus become a central figure in the Buna project. In his dual function as Reich Commissioner for the Consolidation of the German Nation and Reichsführer SS, he was responsible both for the resettlement of the local Poles and Jews from the town of Auschwitz and for their subsequent provision as concentration camp labor⁶⁷. According to the state planners, the construction site was also under Himmler's administration. Despite this eminent importance of the **RFSS, there** is no indication in the files that members of IG Farben had made direct contact with Himmler up to this point. They had evidently preferred to use the tried and tested relationships within the Nazi economic bureaucracy to reach their goal in this matter.

⁶¹ Nuremberg doc. NI-11113, memorandum on a meeting with Krauch, 6.2.1941, p. 1 f. Interestingly, this is the only mention of a possible location in Norway in the NI documents. In Nuremberg doc. NI-8842, Bericht zur Buna-Erzeugung 1940/41, 12.12.1941, p. 8, November 1940 is mentioned as the date for the decision against Norway.

⁶² Ibid, p. 2.

⁶³ The initiative that led to the use of concentration camp prisoners therefore came from Ambras and ter Meer. Hayes, Industry, p. 350, who considers Krauch to be the driving force, must therefore be contradicted on this point.

⁶⁴ In his testimony in Nuremberg Doc. NI-4033, p. 9 f., Krauch denied this course of events in his defense, but it can be proven from the files.

⁶⁵ Nuremberg doc. NI-11113, memorandum on a meeting with Krauch, 6.2.1941.

⁶⁶ The difference postulated by Sandkühler/Schmuhl, I.G. Farben, p. 263, between Krauch's view, who allegedly "pushed for work slaves from the concentration camp", and that of IG Farben, which "focused on settlement policy", cannot be derived from the sources cited there. Rather, they indicate that such a distinction could not have been made at the time.

⁶⁷ Although the inhabitants of Auschwitz were not (at least not directly) committed to the concentration camp there, the IG managers should have assumed that this was the case in February 1941.

Carl Krauch, Chairman of the Supervisory Board of IG Farben since 1940, was the right contact person for the IG managers in charge of the Buna project as General Commissioner for Special Issues of Chemical Production (GBChem) within the framework of the Four-Year Plan. Even if he could not decide alone on the allocation of all the resources required for construction, he was an ally in a prominent position with good connections within the Nazi hierarchy. Krauch apparently also used these connections to the benefit of IG Farben, because not even two weeks after his meeting with ter Meer

and Ambros received the first news of success: Krauch had contacted his employer, the head of the four-year plan authority, Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring, with whom he had a close relationship⁶⁸. On February 18, 1941, Göring signed a directive that covered all the key points that Ambros and ter Meer had raised in the meeting on February 6.

This also solved the question of how Himmler could be won over to the IG: As part of the Four-Year Plan, Göring was authorized to give instructions to the Reichsführer SS; Himmler was therefore committed to supporting the Auschwitz rearmament project from the outset. Moreover, according to Göring's decree, he had to coordinate the form of support with GBChem Krauch. It is therefore not surprising that Himmler's orders of February 26 were identical in content to Göring's directive of February 18, 1941, which was also influenced by the GBChem. At any rate, Krauch was able to inform Ambros with satisfaction at the beginning of March that the Reichsführer SS had ordered at the end of February exactly what the IG representatives had demanded in talks with him just four weeks earlier⁶⁹:

- "1. the Jews in Auschwitz are to be resettled as quickly as possible, their apartments are to be vacated and secured for the accommodation of the construction workers of the Bunawerk.
2. No Poles from the Auschwitz area who were suitable as laborers or construction workers for the Buna factory were allowed to be deported.
3. The inspector of the concentration camps and the head of the V- and W-Hauptamt is instructed to contact the construction manager of the Bunawerk immediately on the spot and to support the construction project with prisoners from the concentration camp to the greatest extent possible."

If one juxtaposes Himmler's order with the interview report of February 6, the sequence of events that ultimately led to the provision of prisoner labor in the form of resettlement can be reconstructed as follows: The IG negotiators gave Krauch a suggestion to this effect, which was incorporated into his application to Göring. The head of the Four-Year Plan Authority adopted the proposal of his highly esteemed colleague and issued Himmler with an instruction, which the RFSS issued shortly afterwards almost unchanged as an order. The vehemence with which Ambros had expressed the ideas of the IG with regard to resettlement measures to reduce the labor force leaves no other option.

⁶⁸ Nümbg. doc. NI-4033, Krauch statement, 13.2.1947, p. 1.

⁶⁹ Nümbg. doc. NI-9767, Gritzenbach statement, 14.8.1947, p. 2. Erich Gritzenbach was Göring's chief of staff.

⁷⁰ Nümbg. doc. NI-11086, Krauch to IG, 4.3.1941, p. 1a.

conclusion. The precise and prompt implementation of these wishes in political decisions can therefore be attributed to the initiative of the IG⁷¹.

This also applies to the provision of concentration camp prisoners, which was later always denied by the IG representatives. This point cannot be separated from resettlement: As far as was known at the time, resettlement meant the resettlement of the native non-German population, whose living space was to be used for German workers. However, as the people to be resettled were needed for the construction phase of the Buna plant, they had to be somehow integrated into Auschwitz were to remain. The IG had known since mid-January 1941 that the concentration camp was intended for this purpose⁷². From this time at the latest, a demand for resettlement in the sense of IG Farben always meant the use of concentration camp prisoners. German resettlers could only be brought to the area around Auschwitz by the Reich Commissioner for the Consolidation of the German Nation once accommodation was available there. This connection was known to the responsible board members Ambros and ter Meer at the time of the decision for the Auschwitz site on February 6, 1941. The promising indications from various authorities and the support that Krauch had signaled to them apparently gave them the impression that the labor factor would develop to the satisfaction of the IG.

With regard to the controversial question of why IG Farbenindustrie chose Auschwitz as its location, the following can be said: Otto Ambras and his employees chose Auschwitz out of all the alternatives because it had the most convincing location factors in its favor. These included good transport connections, a favorable supply of raw materials, a sufficient water supply - and the prospect of a sufficient potential workforce. The latter could only be ensured, especially in the initial phase, by the Auschwitz concentration camp, which was under construction, as the Poles and Jews to be deported from Auschwitz were to be housed there. The existence

⁷¹ Plumpe, I.G. Farbenindustrie, p. 382 ff., attempts to create the opposite impression in his account. According to Plumpe, Göring's order of February 18, 1941 "justified" the cooperation with the Auschwitz concentration camp and thus also initiated the use of prisoners for factory construction. Apart from the considerations of the IG and the corresponding documents for the preceding weeks, this assumption also seems absurd in view of the usual decision-making processes within the Nazi economic administration. Assuming that Plumpe's account is correct, one would have to assume that Göring had sufficient knowledge of the basic availability of prisoners in Auschwitz in February 1941. The question arises as to where the Reichsmarschall would have obtained such information if not from his close collaborator Krauch, who was responsible for this. But Plumpe implicitly denies this. KL Auschwitz was still so insignificant at this time that Göring could not have had any personal knowledge of the possibilities of such a use of prisoners unless it was brought to him via the IG management and Krauch. Göring undoubtedly supported the concerns of the IG and GBChem in this matter, but in no case can he be credited with the initiative.

⁷² Nümbg. doc. NI-11 784, Josenhans report, 16.1.1941, p. 3.

of the camp was thus a necessary prerequisite for the choice of location, although undoubtedly not the only ^{one}⁷³.

The IG board did not choose Auschwitz because prisoners could be deployed there as forced laborers. But it chose Auschwitz because, among other things, it seemed to provide sufficient labor⁷⁴. The board members consciously accepted that this would include concentration camp prisoners. The idea of bringing in forced laborers for new large-scale projects had obviously been accepted for some time beforehand. At the

In any case, the IG had considered similar plans for the construction project in Rattwitz, which was abandoned in the summer of 1940⁷⁵.

Ambros had reported in detail on the advantages of the location to the Technical Committee (TEA). The individual reasons for his very clear plea in favor of Auschwitz therefore also remained in the memory of the TEA members: in addition to the proximity to the Upper Silesian coal and the "relatively

In addition to the "improbability of air raids", it was also the "availability of labor from the Auschwitz concentration camp"⁷⁶. All essential information presented to the TEA inevitably also came to the attention of the Executive Board. This is illustrated by a look at the decision-making structure at the highest level of the IG hierarchy.

The IG Executive Board met the day after each TEA meeting. The head of the TEA, ter Meer, reported to it on all matters that had been discussed ^{there}⁷⁷. The decisions of the TEA members only became valid with the approval of the board. "The Executive Board, however, usually acted on their recommendations." The chairman of the IG

Supervisory Board, Krauch, even went so far as to say that "the TEA is the forerunner of the stood"⁷⁸. In fact, the technical committee was more than a committee reporting to the board. working committee. Instead, the board members dealing with technical issues discussed complex technical problems with their most important engineers and technicians. In practice, the TEA was therefore more of a body within the Executive Board.

⁷³ The view of Hayes, Industry, p. 350 f., that Ambros decided in favor of Auschwitz before "the possibility of employing inmates emerged" overlooks the fact that this was not an independent "possibility" at the time of the decision, but an inevitable consequence of the resettlement measures. Ambros was aware of this connection before the location decision.

⁷⁴ Sandkühler/Schmuhl, I.G. Farben, also demonstrate the extraordinary importance of labor procurement for the construction of the new industrial plant. Together with the sources listed here, the In contrast to Plumpe and Hayes, it can be assumed that the labor issue was one of the "favorable conditions" of the Auschwitz site.

⁷⁵ In the report on the first reconnaissance trip to Silesia with Otto Ambros, who still favoured the Rattwitz site, the authors noted positively: "Since the prison camp set up in the summer and that of the Todt organization are still ready, work on the be taken to the construction site." These were probably French prisoners of war who were taken into German custody in large numbers after the armistice with France (22.6.1940). Nuremberg doc. NI-11110, Report, I 8. 12. 1940, p. 1.

⁷⁶ Nümbg. doc. NI-4999, Struss statement, 27.3.1947, p. 2.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Nümbg. doc. NI-6120, statement by Krauch, 29.3.1947, p. 1 f.

The purchasing committee was also involved in the same way. The purchasing committee prepared technical questions from its field of work in the same way. for the Executive Board. This procedure also ensured that the Executive Board was able to make decisions on the essential points despite the branched business areas of the IG.

"had actual knowledge of the operation of the factories"⁷⁹. The clear hierarchical structure of the Group ultimately ensured that the decisions of the Management Board were implemented precisely. The managers of the individual plants therefore only had a clearly defined scope of action, which was given to them by the responsible members of the Management Board.

No important decision could therefore be made without the knowledge of the Management Board. Every single loan request for the construction of IG Auschwitz was passed on via the

TEA on the table of the Management Board, even though Ambros was authorized to sign within the approved total amount of RM 400 million⁸⁰. The construction of a prisoner camp could therefore no more remain hidden from the board members than the employment of concentration camp inmates. A decision

of such importance could only be passed by the Executive Board. The Board approved the corresponding application without raising any objections ⁸¹. Furthermore, the amount of the investment in Auschwitz alone ensured that the new

plant required special attention. Ambros therefore had to report to the TEA several times on the progress of construction work. He described the number and structure of the workers employed at Auschwitz in detailed "diagrams"⁸². These also formed the basis of the TEA's calculations for allocating the necessary loans. Responsible to the entire Executive Board for all "Ar

Ambros was in charge of "labor deployment and administrative issues" at IG Auschwitz, which is why he had himself informed "about all the events at IG Buna Auschwitz"⁸³.

Once the construction of the new plant had been approved by the Group's highest committee, the actual preparatory work began. Although it was roughly clear where the plant would get its raw materials, water and labor from, there was still a lot to be done - and time was of the essence. This was also clear to Krauch, who therefore contacted the IG managers responsible for the Buna IV construction project just one week after Göring's decree. He emphasized the paramount importance of the factory to be built for the German war economy; for this reason, Göring had given it absolute priority over other projects. Krauch therefore expected Ambros, "in view of such a special emphasis on the importance of your task, *to* do everything he could on his own initiative". to start production as quickly as possible, regardless of costs of any kind"⁸⁴, and also to encourage its employees to behave accordingly.

⁷⁹ Nuremberg doc. NI-61 20, Krauch statement, March 29, 1947, p. 3.

⁸⁰ Nuremberg doc. NI- 14290, Struss testimony, 27. 10.1 947, p. 1.

⁸¹ Nuremberg doc. NI-4033, statement Krauch, 13.2.47, p. 2 f.

⁸² Nuremberg doc. NI-5 1 90, statement by Schnitzler, 27.3.1 947, p. 1 ff. Nuremberg doc. NI-4999, statement by Struss, 27.3.1 947, S. 1.

⁸³ Nuremberg Doc. NI-4033, statement Krauch, 13.2.47, p. 3 f.

⁸⁴ Nuremberg doc. NI- 1 1938, Krauch to Ambros, 25.2. 1941.

to motivate the workers. In an almost prophetic way, Krauch thus formulated the motto under which the IG Auschwitz project was to operate over the next four years: ruthless exploitation of the available work potential. Before work could begin on site, however, one fundamental question had to be clarified: Who was to pay for the costs of the gigantic construction project in eastern Upper Silesia?

The financing of Buna-IV

Previous historical research has given a fairly clear answer to the question of financing: IG Farbenindustrie paid for the fourth Buna factory from its own funds, as it expected the project to prove profitable⁸⁵. The first part of this interpretation initially follows the contemporary

IG's view: "Financing is provided from I.G. Farben funds.

industrie Aktiengesellschaft."⁸⁶ The members of the executive board adhered to this statement even after the end of the war⁸⁷. Whether the IG top management expected that satisfactory profits could be achieved with Buna-IV seems rather questionable after the IG arguments put forward during the site selection process.

In fact, the construction of a production facility with wartime economic significance was a rather complicated bureaucratic affair. In the case of IG Auschwitz, the Reich Ministry of Economics was the client for the new plant. However, it did not take over its financing, but wanted the new plant to be built on the basis of private investment. The question remains, however, what prompted the IG to invest more than half a billion Reichsmark in a pure armaments factory in eastern Upper Silesia? After all, the IG was "not building in Auschwitz on its own initiative, but would have chosen a more favorable location for the Buna plant in the east from a purely private economic point of view"⁸⁸.

It had already been established above that the construction of a factory in Eastern Upper Silesia would have caused far higher investment costs than a factory expansion at the existing locations. The prospect of large and early profits from production could therefore not justify the immense investment. On the day of their meeting with Krauch, the IG representatives had clearly expressed this view to representatives of the Reich Minister of Economics.

⁸⁵ Borkin, I.G. Farben, p. 109 f., for example, speaks of a "purely private enterprise" for which IG would have assumed the full risk without state subsidies. Plumpe, I.G. Farbenindustrie, p. 389 f., mentions the state support for Buna production, but speaks of a "considerable risk" for IG. Furthermore, Plumpe emphasizes that - although "rubber synthesis was not a profitable business for I.G." - "it cannot be doubted that it could have become so after a few years". In view of the IG management's considerations, which repeatedly emerge in the sources, as to how the Buna overcapacity could be converted to other products as quickly and cost-effectively as possible after the end of the war, Plumpe's hope for Buna profits in peacetime seems completely unfounded. Hayes does not comment explicitly on this question.

⁸⁶ Nuremberg doc. NI- 1 1942, Application for a declaration of readiness for construction, 25.5.1941, p. 4.

⁸⁷ Nümbg. doc. NI-7604, Schneider statement, 22.4. 1 1947.

⁸⁸ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 1 125, 10th construction meeting, 26.8.1941, p. 4.

s expressed: "There can be no doubt that the construction of the Buna plant in Auschwitz, whose production will start in the second half of 1943 at the earliest, represents a particular risk. After all, the start of production in Auschwitz is four and three years later than the start of large-scale production in Schkopau and Huls respectively, and it is therefore by no means clear whether the Buna plant in Auschwitz will be able to remain in full production long enough for the factory facilities to be written off. In addition

This is due to the very significant increase in investment costs compared to the originally planned peak expansion of the Huls plant." ⁸⁹

A primarily profit-oriented motivation for the private financing of IG Auschwitz can therefore be ruled out at the time of the location decision. The management of IG Farbenindustrie must therefore have been pursuing longer-term corporate policy goals. 1941 IG Farben was the sole producer of Buna in the German Reich - and wanted to remain so. In order to maintain its monopoly, the Board of Management was prepared to finance even unprofitable or unprofitable projects, but not a factory the size of Buna-IV. Although the company management was well aware of the regime's ability to intervene in economic policy based on its own experience⁹⁰, it did not *consider* the risk in this case to be significant. The new technology for the synthetic production of rubber was so complicated that the IG board member Ernst Struss was able to predict the break-up of Buna-IV.

monopoly by another company was considered impossible simply because of the expertise required⁹¹. Since there was therefore no economically plausible reason for purely private-sector financing of Buna-IV, we must now take a closer look at how the financial settlement was actually organized.

The first steps towards a solution to the financing issue that was acceptable to the IG were already taken on the presumed day of the location decision. On February 6, 1941, the IG board members ter Meer and Am
brose also held talks with representatives of the Reich Ministry of Economics⁹². From the general guidelines laid down in these discussions, ter Meer and the head of IG Farben's central accounting department, Paul Heinrich Dencker, developed a concrete proposal. Two weeks later, the Technical Committee, the responsible body of IG Farben, was able to submit it to the Ministry⁹³. The central content was to offset the "excessive" costs for the plant in East Upper Silesia - compared to the expansion of the existing factories - with productivity gains in the existing Buna plants. The latter were therefore not to lead to price reductions for the customer - the Reich - as had actually been agreed. Although the technical development in Schkopau and Huls would have made a selling price of RM 2 per kilogram of Buna possible, the negotiating partners decided to maintain the old price level of RM 2.30.

⁸⁹ Nümbg. doc. NI-111 12, memorandum on a meeting at the RWM, February 6, 1941.

⁹⁰ Cf. the comments in Hayes, IG Farben, p. 132, and Industry, pp. 133 f., 145-151 and 188-193.

⁹¹ Nümbg. doc. NI-111 09, Struss statement, 16.4.1947, p. 6.

⁹² StA Frankfurt a.M., criminal case 4 Ks 2/63, folder 26, memo from the RWM, February 6, 1941.

⁹³ Nümbg. doc. NI-111 14, TEA to RWM, 22.2.1941.

Every kilogram of Buna sold was therefore to support the construction of Buna-IV with 30 pfennigs. With a targeted annual output of around 1 20 000 tons in Buna-I to -III, this meant that the Reich would contribute around 36 million RM to the construction costs. In the final agreement reached between the IG, the Reich Ministry of Economics and the pricing commissioner, a maximum "Buna revenue levy" of RM 60 million was finally agreed⁹⁴.

However, this was not the only form of support from the Reich. Since 1940, additional special depreciation allowances of two percent on buildings and five percent on machinery applied to the "four-year plan plants", which were commissioned by the GBChem and financed "privately", allowing for significantly faster amortization. However, the tax relief granted by the Reich "for the consolidation of Germanness in the East [...] for voluntary immigration from the Reich"⁹⁵ had the greatest impact. According to this "Eastern tax aid", the IG in Auschwitz was entitled to apply a complete exemption from valuation for its investments in equipment and a 20 percent exemption for real estate⁹⁶. This meant that the business assets to be taken into account for the tax assessment were considerably reduced. The depreciation benefits were so great that at the time of the evacuation in January 1945, less than four years after the start of construction, the book value of the facilities in Auschwitz was already less than half of the actual asset value⁹⁷. For Ernst Struss, this unusually rapid amortization of investments was the main financial reason for never leaving Auschwitz⁹⁸. The actual expected costs for Buna-IV were therefore comparatively low when all tax advantages and subsidies were utilized. Despite accepting the expensive location in the East, the IG Management Board had thus safeguarded the interests of the Group - and continued to keep an eye on them.

Contacting the SS

The first contacts with the SS also took place during the negotiations on the financing of IG Auschwitz. Although the central role of the Reichsführer SS in the rapid realization of the construction project had been obvious for some time, he had only officially learned of it through Göring's decree of 18 February 1941. Himmler's prompt support for the project may seem surprising at first; however, the Reich Marshal's instruction was in line with a long-held wish of the Reichsführer SS: he had been trying to interest industry in the labor potential of "his" camps since the mid-1930s⁹⁹. After his efforts had been unsuccessful, he began

⁹⁴ Nümbg. doc. NI-7237, Dencker statement, June 7, 1947, p. 2.

⁹⁵ Nümbg. doc. NI-11 1 25, 10th construction meeting, 26.8.1941.

⁹⁶ Nümbg. doc. NI-7237, Dencker statement, 7.6.1947, p. 3.

⁹⁷ Cf. Plumpe, I.G. Farbenindustrie, p. 389.

⁹⁸ Nümbg. doc. NI-11 09, Struss statement, 16.4.1947, p. 7 f. The English text refers to the "main business reason for I.G.".

⁹⁹ Cf. Hayes, Industry, p. 352.

Himmler wanted to build up his own economic power with the help of the prisoners. However, the SS-owned companies that were set up proved to be only moderately efficient, mainly due to a lack of business experience. Göring's decree now seemed to offer an unexpected opportunity to establish direct cooperation with private industry after all. Himmler must have hoped that this would provide him with urgently needed economic know-how as well as long-term opportunities to exert influence, in short: the large-scale use of concentration camp prisoners in the armaments industry could only be beneficial to his power interests and therefore aroused his personal interest.

Only days after he had called on all his departments to support the IG, Himmler paid a visit to Auschwitz, which had been insignificant until then. The prospect of cooperating with Germany's largest chemical company seemed to inspire his visions. Even without more precise knowledge of the planned plant, he instructed Commandant Höss to expand the camp to a capacity of 30,000 inmates, of whom around 10,000 were to be kept ready for use at the Buna plant¹⁰⁰. In the meantime, the RFSS evidently had big plans for the Auschwitz concentration camp: in addition to expanding the main camp, he also ordered concrete plans to be made for the construction of a prisoner-of-war camp with a capacity of 100,000 men near the village of Birkenau¹⁰¹. To ensure the success of the emerging cooperation with the IG, Himmler appointed the chief of his personal staff, SS Gruppenführer Karl Wolff, as "liaison between the Reichsführer SS and the Auschwitz plant"¹⁰².

The IG's contact was most likely board member Heinrich Bütefisch, who had been a member of the SS since 1939¹⁰³ and was already acquainted with Wolff¹⁰⁴. The first meeting between Himmler's chief of staff and the IG, which was represented by Walther Dürrfeld and Max Faust in addition to Bütefisch, took place in Berlin on March 20, 1941¹⁰⁵. After getting to know each other for the first time, Dürrfeld seems to have taken over the conversation and quickly moved on to the actual topic¹⁰⁶. When he asked "in what way the Auschwitz concentration camp could support IG Auschwitz, namely with regard to deliveries from the various workshops of the concentration camp [...] and with regard to the provision of labor", there was initially little sign of the support that Himmler had imposed on all departments. After Ambros'

¹⁰⁰ Nuremberg Doc. NI-34, Höß testimony, Aug. 13, 1946, p. 2.

¹⁰¹ Cf. *ibid.* and Chap. IV. 1.

¹⁰² Nuremberg doc. NI- 1 1782, Report on the tour of the Auschwitz site, 4.2. 1941.

¹⁰³ Nuremberg Doc. NI-4 182, Bütefisch testimony, Feb. 19, 1947, p. I.

¹⁰⁴ Nuremberg doc. NI-98 19, Faust statement, 7.8. 1947, p. 2.

¹⁰⁵ BAB, R 81 28/A J 984, visit report, 30.3. 1941, p. I. According to the report, the later head of office group D of the Economic Administration Main Office, Glücks, also took part in the meeting. Nümbg. doc. NI-98 19, Faust statement, 7.8.1947, p. 2.

¹⁰⁶ Nuremberg doc. NI-9819, Faust statement, 7.8. 1947, p. 2.

Wolff replied very cautiously to the reminder: "I cannot give you a binding promise." ¹⁰⁷ Wolff also pointed out that detailed agreements could only be made with the local authorities in accordance with the general guidelines for the allocation of labor. The IG managers had to realize that the SS did not exactly force concentration camp prisoners on them. If the use of prisoners on the construction site was to become a reality, efforts had to be made - and corresponding compensation had to be provided.

2. The IG establishes itself in Auschwitz

In the weeks following the site decision, preparations for the new project began in all IG departments. Sometime between mid-February and mid-March 1941, however, the planning basis for Buna-IV changed considerably. While it had initially appeared that the Schlesien-Benzin fuel synthesis plant originally planned for the site near Monowitz had been stopped in favor of expanding Buna production, the Reich authorities had apparently come to a new assessment of the supply situation. The Reich Office for Economic Expansion now commissioned the construction of the fuel factory after all, but did not assign it to Schlesien-Benzin, but rather to Buna-Benzin.

also to the IG. In March 1941, it finally became clear that Auschwitz would no longer just be home to Buna-IV, but a "large chemical plant" ¹⁰⁸ for the production of synthetic fuel and rubber.

Otto Ambros therefore welcomed IG-Werke executives from Ludwigshafen and Leuna to the first construction meeting for the planned plant in Auschwitz on March 24, 1941 in Ludwigshafen. This meeting marked the start of a new collaboration between the fuel synthesis (whose central development was based in Leuna) and Buna (Ludwigshafen) divisions, which Ambros hoped would provide a "secure basis [...] for fast and successful work [...] despite the expected difficulties in the East" ¹⁰⁹. The all-day construction meetings became a permanent fixture in the following years, at which all technical and organizational matters were discussed and decisions were made within the framework of the guidelines of the higher IG committees. Initially, they were held every 14 days, usually in Ludwigshafen, and later about every other month in Auschwitz. As a rule, the morning meetings were followed by a tour of the construction site after lunch. The meetings were officially chaired by the two responsible supervisors.

The young engineer Walther Dürrfeld ¹¹⁰, who was responsible for the Buna section, soon became the "leading" figure.

¹⁰⁷ NMT, vol. 8, p. 772, quote in Ambros' testimony during the trial: "I can't give you any binding promise."

¹⁰⁸ Nümbg. doc. NI-1 111 6, annex to the 2nd construction meeting, 1.4.1941 p. 6.

¹⁰⁹ Nümbg. doc. NI-111 15, 1st construction meeting, 24.3.1941, p. 1.

¹¹⁰ Nümbg. doc. NI-9809, August 5, 1947, Heidebroek statement, p. 1 f. Reinhard Heidebroek was the assembly manager for the plastics department at IG Auschwitz and took the minutes of the construction meetings.

However, the official plant manager of IG Auschwitz was initially Otto Ambros, who was also responsible for the plant to the IG's Technical Committee. However, due to his many other obligations as a member of the board, Ambros was not in a position to actually take on this task in practice. He therefore appointed chief engineer Max Faust as his deputy right from the start of construction and entrusted him with the day-to-day running of the plant. Faust also conducted the negotiations with Höß about the use of concentration camp prisoners. In the months that followed, however, he apparently succeeded less and less

Dürrfeld, who was finally given the position of deputy plant manager in 1942^{111 1}. Although actually only responsible for the Buna section, Dürrfeld developed into "practically

as plant manager of IG Auschwitz", so that the managers responsible for the synthesis section increasingly lost influence¹¹². After a meeting between the two board members responsible for IG Auschwitz, Ambras and Bütetisch, the main plant manager of IG Farbenindustrie, Christian Schneider, officially appointed the ambitious chemist as plant manager.

In addition to his assertiveness, Dürrfeld was probably qualified for this task above all due to his work as chief engineer in Leuna, where he had allegedly proven himself to be an "extraordinarily capable and socially minded person"¹¹³. Another argument in Dürrfeld's favor may have been his comparatively young age: he became plant manager of IG Auschwitz¹¹⁴ at the age of 42; most of the other senior employees, including Faust and Santo, were around ten years older. This circumstance probably had a favorable influence on his collaboration with Ambras, who was only two years younger and to whom he was now personally responsible¹¹⁵.

Good cooperation between the management team was also necessary, because Buna-IV was not only a major challenge from a technical point of view. After IG had accepted the political requirements of a location in Upper Silesia in the fall of 1940, despite the increased costs, everything was done from the spring of 1941 to build a plant that was as efficient as possible and in line with the company's interests. In detail, the plan was to produce

¹¹¹ Nümbg. doc. NI-4182, Bütetisch statement, 19.2. 1947, p. 4.

¹¹² Nümbg. doc. NI-10929, Braus statement, August 23, 1947, p. 2.

¹¹³ Nuremberg doc. NI-1686, Schneider testimony, March 27, 1947, p. 68.

¹¹⁴ Dürrfeld was born in Saarbrücken on June 24, 1899. He joined IG in 1927 as a graduate engineer. After just five years, he was head of the workshops for the high-pressure area and subsequently became the highest-ranking engineer in Leuna. In 1941 Ambros entrusted him with the technical management of the construction of the fourth Buna plant. Nuremberg doc. NI-4184, Dürrfeld statement, February 18, 1947.

¹¹⁵ Otto Ambros was born on May 19, 1901.

30,000 tons of Buna S using the already successfully tested "four-stage process", for which experienced personnel were available in Ludwigshafen ¹¹⁶. However, only the absolutely necessary construction work was to be carried out without the possibility of expansion, as it was hoped from the outset that the "Reppe process" being tested in Buna-III could soon be used ¹¹⁷. The styrene chemistry plants were also designed in such a way that they could be converted to other polymerization components without great effort. The search was also on for ways to economically utilize the by-products of production, such as synthetic binders.

The fuel section of the new factory was to synthesize 75,000 tons of petrol per year from hard coal. This plant, which operated according to the "modified Fischer process", was designed so that it could supply alternative products after the end of the war, including fuels, alcohols and olefins as well as methanol, ethanol, propanol and isobutyl oils. The navy was available as a customer for the considerable quantities of tar produced, from which heating oil could be obtained by distillation.

In order to be able to take advantage of additional production opportunities within the new "paint plan", Ambros proposed the production of 20,000 tons of propanol per year. In this context, Director v. Staden emphasized the development potential of hydrocarbon chemistry, which should be taken into account in the planning. Eisfeld also suggested including the "use of inorganic chemistry" in the planning phase. All of the IG directors present emphasized how important it was to prepare the plant for the future.

requirements that went far beyond the immediate necessities of war ¹¹⁸.

The overall planning of the Auschwitz factory as a combined plant was initially awarded to Dürrfeld, Santo (construction department) and Mach (design office) in Ludwigshafen. The civil engineers under Santo and Mach had already begun the surveying work and were concerned with the best possible logistical arrangement of the factory parts in relation to each other. The wind direction was also decisive here: due to the prevailing south-westerly air flow in the Auschwitz area, it was agreed that the exhaust-intensive parts of the plant (carbide factory, lime sintering plant and coal gasification) should be built in the northern part. The basic planning was to be completed by April 1, 1941.

In order to "familiarize all the responsible authorities with the Auschwitz construction project", the Krauch office had arranged a meeting through Dr. Eckell for 7 April in

¹¹⁶ At the end of 1942, the "K" Commission (= Fabrication Commission for Rubber and Plastics) of the IG assumed that the total capacity of 30,000 tons per year should be divided between Buna S (four-fifths) and Perbunan (one-fifth). BAL, 141 -005-003, 8th meeting of Commission "K", 8. 12. 1942, p. 7. Buna S was mainly used for the production of tires, but also for hoses, cables, soles and heels. Perbunan was used in the oil and machine industry, where oil- and petrol-resistant soft rubber materials were required. BAL, 141 -005-003, 2nd meeting of Commission "K", 21. 3. 1939, Appendix.

¹¹⁷ Nümbg. doc. NI-11115, 1st construction meeting, 24.3. 1941, p. 2 ff.

¹¹⁸ Nümbg. doc. NI-11115, I. Baubesprechung, 24.3.1941. p. 5.

Katowice was suggested. This was the same path that had been followed at the beginning of the construction work in Rattwitz when the representatives of the authorities had met in Wrocław. The Rattwitz project, which had only been abandoned three quarters of a year earlier, made the initial work on the new construction site easier in many respects anyway. Complete plans for some of the administrative buildings were already in the drawers and could just as easily be realized in Auschwitz. Barracks originally intended for the construction workforce in Rattwitz were dismantled by the construction company and transported to Auschwitz. They also wanted to follow the Rattwitz example when recruiting workers, where the initial experience with the application and recruitment process via the IG subsidiary Luranil was positive¹¹⁹.

Cooperation between IG and SS

However, the labor situation in Auschwitz was considerably different. In contrast to the catchment area of Breslau, the local population here consisted almost exclusively of Poles and Jews, who did not appear to IG to be suitable for the workforce. This did not matter during the planning phase, as experienced engineers from the western IG plants could and had to be brought in anyway. A specific request for workers was therefore not sent to the employment office until the end of April ¹²⁰. Nevertheless, the company had not been idle in the interim period, but had continued to pursue what had already been prepared by Ambras and Krauch during the site selection process: the use of concentration camp prisoners.

The foundations of the cooperation between the IG and the SS, from which both sides wanted to benefit, had been discussed in the aforementioned meeting of

20. March 1941. At this meeting, the IG Farben representatives readily promised SS leaders Wolff and Glücks that they would support the expansion of the concentration camp by allocating "material codes" from their contingent, "as they can only begin planning the new plant with the support of the concentration camp"¹²¹. Subject to availability on site, Wolff promised to work for the allocation of 700 prisoners as laborers, the transfer of required skilled workers from other concentration camps to Auschwitz, the registration of all free labor in the surrounding area and further support from the concentration camp on site ¹²². The basis of the cooperation between the SS and the IG in Auschwitz was therefore a barter deal: labor for building materials. The SS used the establishment of IG Auschwitz to accelerate the expansion of its concentration camp.

¹¹⁹ Nümbg. doc. NI-11 15, 1st construction meeting, 24.3.1941, p. 6-9.

¹²⁰ Nümbg. doc. NI- 14183, President LAA Upper Silesia to RAM, 29.4.1941.

¹²¹ StA Frankfurt a.M., criminal case 4 Ks 2/63, folder 26, Pohl to Glücks, April 5, 1941.

¹²² Nümbg. doc. NI-11 115, 1st construction meeting, 24.3.1941, p. 9 f.

camp. Without the transfer of material quotas from the IG, the expansion of KL Auschwitz ordered by Himmler would initially have failed due to bureaucratic obstacles ¹²³.

This basic agreement on the modalities of cooperation made the detailed negotiations with the camp management in Auschwitz considerably easier. While the meeting in Berlin was still characterized by a wait-and-see attitude, Dürrfeld was able to make the first meeting with the commandant of KL Auschwitz, SS-Stunnbannführer Höß, at the end of March 1941 had already established a "matter-of-fact and yet very cordial tone" ¹²⁴. At this meeting, Höß promised his full support in the construction of the plant - as far as the personnel and material situation allowed. KL Auschwitz had been completely unprepared for the assignment of prisoners to the armaments industry. For the first year of construction, the commandant Dürrfeld was therefore "only" able to allocate a contingent of 1,000 prisoners, which was to increase to 3,000 in 1942. The camp management made higher allocations dependent above all on the timely procurement of the iron required for the expansion of the accommodation. The economic framework for the work assignment was also agreed at this first meeting. It was agreed that the prisoners would work ten to eleven hours in summer and at least nine hours in winter. The IG was to pay three RM per day for each unskilled worker and four RM for each skilled worker. This all-inclusive price, which was based on a 75 percent higher labor rate than that of a free German worker, was

The price was based on work performance and included all costs for transportation and meals ¹²⁵.

The factory management was obviously satisfied with this result. In the first weekly report of IG Auschwitz, engineer Murr expressed his satisfaction with the construction office was pleased with the negotiations with the concentration camp and expected "a nice smooth working relationship with them" ¹²⁶. In the meantime, the construction office for the new plant had been set up in the mayor's office of the town of Auschwitz, which was housed in the castle overlooking the town. The first RAD barracks from the construction site in Rattwitz had already arrived, but could not be set up immediately. In the meantime, planning continued intensively in the various areas: among other things, considerations were given to the drinking water supply, the construction of sewage treatment plants, the location of the works railway station and the probable traffic volume. On the station site, the construction management rented a first railroad shed as storage for incoming building materials ¹²⁷. In addition intensive work was carried out on a model of the plant in order to be able to

¹²³ In order to destroy the camp extension, the SS was dependent on approval from the General Plenipotentiary for the Regulation of the Construction Industry, which, in Pohl's opinion, "would hardly have been granted". He therefore considered it "more promising to take a different path", which led to cooperation with the IG. StA Frankfurt a.M., criminal case 4 Ks 2/63, folder 26, Pohl to Glücks, 5.4.1941.

¹²⁴ Nümbg. doc. NI-15 148, Dürrfeld report, 27.3.1941, p. 1.

¹²⁵ Nümbg. doc. NI-15 148, Dürrfeld report, 27.3.1941, p. 2.

¹²⁶ Nümbg. doc. NI-14528, 1st weekly report, 1.4.1941.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

The aim was to be able to show a clear picture of the facilities planned up to that point.

IG Farben had invited all relevant representatives of the government, administration and SS to Katowice on April 7, 1941 to demonstrate the importance of the construction project in Auschwitz. What had previously been prepared in secret was now presented with great effort in order to secure the support of all the authorities involved. The management of IG Auschwitz therefore endeavored not only to present the concept of the construction project, but also to embed it in the plans of the Reich government. Otto Ambros praised the new large-scale plant as the IG's contribution "to a strong, healthy German population in the East"¹²⁸ - in line with the concerns of the Reichsführer SS, who wanted to establish "a model of German settlement in the East" in Auschwitz¹²⁹. Settlement policy and industrial settlement were to be intertwined here in order to create a solid basis for the

"Germanization" of the incorporated East Upper Silesia. The bold

The vision of the future probably also convinced Otto Ambros himself, who still spoke of the "beneficial cooperation with the SS"¹³⁰ in a letter to his fellow board member ter Meer a few days later. Two weeks later, this cooperation was to become a reality.

In the second half of April 1941, two work crews began to complete the construction site. Their first task was to build a road from Auschwitz to Dwory, along which the necessary building materials were to be transported. Prisoners were used as laborers from the very beginning. On

On April 21, the management of KL Auschwitz had ordered the "Reich German" political Prisoner Hans Mendler was appointed Kapo of the first detachment of 20 men that marched to "Buna Auschwitz"¹³¹. Over the next few weeks, its size grew to several hundred. According to the third weekly report of IG Auschwitz, at the turn of the month from April to May, a total of 256 workers were employed by the six companies commissioned by IG, 1,50 of whom were prisoners of KL Auschwitz¹³². A further column of prisoners was probably soon added, which was to work with the

The company was engaged in the construction of barracks to house newly recruited workers¹³³.

¹²⁸ Otto Ambros was not alone on the IG board with this opinion. Von Schnitzler expressed a similar view to the HTO in Berlin in connection with the purchase of the Boruta company in Warthegau. Von Schnitzler was "prepared to meet" the RKF's demand for "constructive development work" by wanting to invest five million RM in the Warthegau over and above the purchase price. He gave the following reasons: "We are guided by our desire to make a significant contribution to the industrialization of the Warthegau, as we fully agree with your intentions that the Warthegau, which has been won over to Germanism, should not only provide economic support as an agricultural surplus area, but also as an overall economic entity for German national power in the East." Nümbg. doc. NI- 1197, von Schnitzler to HTO, 16. 1. 1941.

¹²⁹ Nümbg. doc. NI-111 17, Report on the founding meeting of IG Auschwitz in Katowice, April 7, 1941, S. 6 ff.

¹³⁰ Nümbg. doc. NI- 111 18. Ambros to ter Meer, 12.4. 1941.

¹³¹ Here and in the following: Nuremberg Doc. NI- 11 955, Mendler testimony, October 20, 1947, pp. 1-5.

¹³² Nümbg. doc. NI- 14737, 3rd weekly report, 5.5. 1941.

¹³³ Nümbg. doc. NI- 14 183, President LAA Upper Silesia to RAM, 29.4. 1941.

Höß had set five o'clock in the morning for the prisoners to start work. After the three o'clock wake-up call and the morning roll call, they had to march for about an hour and a half to the future factory site, where they were driven to work at full capacity until about 5 pm. SS men were responsible for securing the immediate work area and shot anyone who crossed its imaginary boundaries without exception - there was no fence yet. The SS also supervised the return march of the exhausted prisoners through the town of Auschwitz to the camp, where the evening roll call awaited them. Many were soon so exhausted that they could hardly eat the food that was served afterwards. Such prisoners were taken to the infirmary by their comrades. However, only a few were really able to recover from the exertion there: Those who appeared to the SS doctors to be too emaciated for a speedy recovery were segregated. As a rule, the medical orderly (SDG) or a forced prisoner nurse murdered the completely exhausted prisoners with a phenol injection. For those still The short bed rest began at nine o'clock in the evening for those "fit for work", which could only provide little respite from the hard work. The exploitation of prisoners for the construction of IG Auschwitz had begun.

After this "smooth" start to the project, however, the planners of the large-scale chemical plant suffered a setback. Soil tests on the construction site had shown that the soil, which contained a lot of clay, would only have limited load-bearing capacity even after the groundwater level had been lowered. This meant comparatively high foundation costs, as a pile foundation was required for buildings with heavy loads ¹³⁴. At the third construction meeting, IG director v. Sta den then pleaded for the suitability of the subsoil to be clarified as quickly as possible, after which a different site should be sought if necessary. While it was unanimously agreed that the soil conditions should be checked further and that specialists should be called in, there was another fundamental debate about the Auschwitz site. However, Ambros obviously prevailed with the view that a better location could not be found in Upper Silesia. As none of the alternative sites known to date had the same combination of availability of raw materials, size and safety from mining damage as Auschwitz.

wit, "costly foundations [...] could also be accepted." ¹³⁵ Although the final decision was postponed, the decision was made, "to continue the project planning work regardless of the final assessment of the construction site". The availability of labor, which was a decisive factor in the site selection, was not taken into account in this dispute between the directors from Ludwigshafen and Leuna over purely engineering issues ¹³⁶. However, due to the cooperation with the SS, which he himself initiated and which developed so promisingly, Ambros must have been all the more vehemently in favor of Auschwitz.

¹³⁴ BAB, R 8 128, A 1984, p. 145 ff, 3rd construction meeting, April 23, 1941 in Leuna.

rn BAB, R 8 128, A 1984, p. 146 f., 3rd construction meeting, April 23, 1941 in Leuna.

¹³⁶ The question of labor supply during site selection was so important that no such far-reaching conclusions can be drawn from its absence in a discussion of construction issues as Hayes, IG Farben, p. 136, does.

In the weeks that followed, planning continued without interruption. The construction engineers calculated a total volume of 600,000 cubic meters of earth to be moved, the excavation of which was to begin at the end of May. Work on the central facilities, carbide factory and power plant, was scheduled to start at the beginning of June ¹³⁷, with Dürrfeld assuming a construction period of around two years for the latter. In order to meet this tight deadline, the construction management was dependent on a sufficient supply of labor. A considerable proportion was to be covered by prisoners from the concentration camp. For 1941, Chief Engineer Faust reckoned on using the 1,000 prisoners promised by Höß, which was to be increased in the following years to make up around a quarter of the total construction workforce. In order to secure this plan, the IG-Bauleitung had to participate in the expansion of the concentration camp; in accordance with the agreement with the commandant, the concentration camp had to be paid from the material accounts.

The Buna plant's employees were granted wood and iron for new barracks ¹³⁸.

The IG management was happy to comply with this request, as it hoped to be able to secure a considerable proportion of the required manpower at low cost. In order to obtain an allocation of material for the concentration camp, the IG contacted the "Amt Krauch" again. As the creation of accommodation for additional "prisoner laborers" was also considered a necessary prerequisite for the construction of the armaments project, which was important for the war effort, the reallocation of the material was agreed to in principle ¹³⁹. Delivery to the concentration camp was initially to be made via the IG. Towards the end of the year, however, a conflict arose between the management and the SS over this issue. The camp management had interpreted the offer of support very generously in their favor and had worked out a construction program of seven million RM. Somewhat disgruntled by this brazen approach, the IG-Bauleitung limited the material aid to a maximum of two million RM ¹⁴⁰.

In the course of May 1941, the overall demand for labor was still low. Of the 400 construction workers, 120 were seconded from the concentration camp and continued to work on repairing the road to the factory, as well as filling in a railroad embankment for the connecting track between Dwory station and the factory site. Towards the end of the month, when the surveying work was largely completed, they also began to level a site for the first four RAD barracks. Another detachment renovated a number of houses belonging to deportees that were intended to be taken over by IG employees¹⁴¹. The actual construction work, on the other hand, had not yet been able to begin on a large scale, as a traffic block delayed all deliveries: preparations for the attack on the Soviet Union, which began a few weeks later

¹³⁷ Nümbg. doc. NI-11119, 4th construction meeting, 6.5.1941, p. 2 ff.

¹³⁸ Nümbg. doc. NI-11116, 2nd construction meeting, 1.4.1941, p. 3.

¹³⁹ APMO, D-Au III, t. I, Obenaus to KL Auschwitz, 5.5.1941.

¹⁴⁰ Nümbg. doc. NI-11129, 13th construction meeting, 18.1.1941, p. 4, and Nümbg. doc. NI-15098, 30th week report, 21.12.1941.

¹⁴¹ Nümbg. doc. NI-15236, Mach to Krauch, 4.6.1941.

was running at full speed. Countless Wehrmacht transports also rolled eastwards via the Auschwitz railroad junction, which is why only sporadic civilian transports came to eastern Upper Silesia.

IG and the town of Auschwitz

After the planning of the actual plant site had been completed for the time being, the management of the "I.G. Farbenindustrie A.-G. Werk Auschwitz", as it had been officially called since the end of May 1 941, turned its attention to its surroundings. As there were not enough workers in the region, especially skilled workers, the responsible IG managers had already realized during the location decision that they would be dependent on influxes from the old Reich. In view of the size of the planned workforce, sufficient living space first had to be created in Auschwitz and the surrounding area, as very few buildings in the town met the IG's requirements. While the construction management had therefore included a spacious factory housing estate in their considerations from the outset, there was no development plan for the town of Auschwitz in the spring of 1941.

Instead, the resettlement of the non-German population was still underway here. Auschwitz was located in "evacuation zone I" as defined by the RKF, which was originally supposed to be "evacuated" by April 1, 1942¹⁴². However, after the IG had decided on the Auschwitz site, the authorities responsible for the resettlement of the area brought the date forward¹⁴³. Of the town's total population of 11,200, only the 2,000 ethnic Germans were initially to remain in the town. The 7,000 Jews and a good 2,000 Poles, on the other hand, were earmarked for resettlement¹⁴⁴. Contrary to the original plans, however, these people were not to be sent directly to KL Auschwitz. The camp would hardly have been able to accommodate such a large number at that time. In view of the expected demand for labor, the authorities in charge of the resettlement had found a more pragmatic solution: The head of the SS Resettlement Staff South, SS-Obersturmbannführer Butschek, now wanted to deport the Jews from Auschwitz and the surrounding area to the Generalgouvernement if possible or hand them over to SS-Oberführer Schmelt for labor¹⁴⁵. Some of the Poles, on the other hand, were to be expelled from their homes, but they were to be kept in line with the interests of the IG for use on the construction site

¹⁴² Nümbg. doc. NI-1 1782, report on the inspection trip to Upper Silesia, 1.2. 1 941. Map of settlement zones I and 1a in van Pelt, Site, p. 1 06.

¹⁴³ Nümbg. doc. NI-4033, statement by Krauch, 13.2. 1 947, p. 7; cf. in detail Steinbacher, "Musterstadt" Auschwitz, ch. V.1.

¹⁴⁴ The population figures given in the IG documents probably do not correspond to the facts; see Steinbacher, "Musterstadt" Auschwitz, Chapter V. !

¹⁴⁵ Nümbg. doc. NI- 14187, Bericht des Arbeitsamtes Bielitz, 12.3. 1 941. On the strange special role of SS-Oberführer Albrecht Schmelt, see Steinbacher, "Musterstadt" Auschwitz, chapter III.5; Piper, Arbeits einsatz, p. 233 f., and Gruner, Juden, p. 799 ff.

remain ¹⁴⁶. Accordingly, the settlement staff planned to group them together in "cleared" Jewish-owned buildings in Auschwitz and the immediate vicinity¹⁴⁷.

The resettlement ordered by the Reichsführer SS began at around the same time as the founding meeting of IG Auschwitz. Even before the deportation, IG representatives inspected the residential buildings for possible use. For easier identification

In order to identify the houses inhabited by Jews, they were marked with a small paper roll on the door ¹⁴⁸. In the course of April, the security and order police finally used brutal means to deport the Jewish population to the Sosnowitz ghetto. Deportation to the Generalgouvernement and

However, after an intervention by the labor authorities, which would otherwise have been a The Jews feared a shortage of labor in Upper Silesia¹⁴⁹. The houses from which the Jews had been expelled were now clearly marked with a red cross on the façade ¹⁵⁰. Large and well-preserved buildings were sold by the Haupttreuhand Ost (HTO), which administered all the expropriated Jewish property, to the IG, which housed its senior employees in them¹⁵¹. The result was a coexistence of German and Polish inhabitants in the town of Auschwitz, which in no way corresponded to the ideas of the district president of Upper Silesia, Springorum. He therefore insisted on a strict separation of the nationalities, which was also in the interests of IG Auschwitz after a certain transitional period, as Santo assured him ¹⁵².

Due to the lack of preparatory work for the expansion of Auschwitz into a "German town" and the leading role that the IG would play in the development of the town, its representatives evidently saw themselves in a very strong position. At the fourth construction meeting in early May 1941, Hans Stosberg, the state planner and architect responsible for Auschwitz, was told to "adapt to the plans proposed by the IG"¹⁵³. The outcome of a meeting between Santo and representatives of the district administration, the government and the housing commissioner gave the IG a de facto free hand: although it was supposed to coordinate with Stosberg, as he was in charge of the "overall planning", it was still to be given a free hand.

be able to implement their ideas independently. The settlement project was to be run by "a newly founded company" in which the "IG, district, government and town of Auschwitz" were represented ¹⁵⁴.

¹⁴⁶ Nümbg. doc. NI-141 86, Regional Labor Office Breslau to RAM, 26.3.1 941 : "The head of the Bie litz labor office had the SS resettlement staff secure about 2,000 able-bodied workers from the villages in the immediate vicinity of Auschwitz that were earmarked for resettlement."

¹⁴⁷ Nümbg. doc. NI- 14187, Regional Labor Office Breslau to RAM, 12.3. 1 941.

¹⁴⁸ Nümbg. doc. NI-10930, Doemming statement, p. 2.

¹⁴⁹ Nümbg. doc. NI- 14188, note RAM, 28.2. 1 941: "Furthermore, the LAA. Silesia is to be instructed to take suitable measures in good time to assign the Jews affected by the resettlement to suitable jobs."

¹⁵⁰ Nümbg. doc. NI- I 0930, statement by Rudolf Doemming, 28.8. 1 947, p. 2.

¹⁵¹ Nümbg. doc. NI-9820, Santo statement, 1.3. 1 947, p. 4.

¹⁵² BAB, R 81 28/A 1984, IG file note on a meeting with the authorities, 5.6. 1 941.

¹⁵³ Nümbg. doc. NI-1 1 1 1 9, 4th construction meeting, 6.5.1941, p. 4.

¹⁵⁴ Nümbg. doc. NI-1 1 1 20, 5th construction meeting, 27.5.1 941, p. 2.

In addition to coordination with the regional authorities, it was also necessary to submit the plans to various Reich authorities, which alone could approve such a large project during the war. The meeting with representatives of the Reich Ministry of Aviation and the Reich offices for economic development and spatial planning resulted in a significant change to the construction plans: for reasons of "urban development" and air protection, it was agreed to "move the western boundary of the factory 250 m to the east" ¹⁵⁵. In addition, the IG was instructed to create "dummy roads" and to continue with non-functional field paths in order to camouflage the site from enemy air reconnaissance ¹⁵⁶. Part of the estate was to be built as "pure works housing", the rest as non-profit housing. The former were to be financed independently by the IG, while the latter were to be subsidized by the Reich. With regard to the design of the apartments, the representatives of the IG were able to push through their proposal to build a
to strive for a comparatively high standard for wartime, "so that there is a certain incentive for qualified workers from the Reich" ¹⁵⁷.

The development of the construction site

In addition to the prospect of generous living space, the IG also tried to attract German workers with high collectively agreed wages. However, their efforts were not very successful, as hardly any more workers were recruited for Auschwitz through "free placement" in the near future. The only prospect of recruiting additional workers was through compulsory service or by "borrowing" skilled workers from other IG plants¹⁵⁸. Even the cooperation with the concentration camp was initially unable to eliminate this shortage, as the scarce

The fact that the prisoner contingent could not be increased due to the lack of guards ¹⁵⁹. An application for the allocation of a further 500 prisoners was therefore unsuccessful ¹⁶⁰.

At the end of July 1941, IG and KL finally tried to solve the problem in a different way: instead of making the prisoners walk the six kilometers to the construction site, they were now to be transported by train. It was apparently hoped that supervising a few freight cars would be less manpower-intensive than guarding a march of several hundred camp inmates across open terrain¹⁶¹. In fact, the number of prisoners working on the IG construction site increased considerably over the next few weeks, which was also due to the allocation of additional prisoners.
guard posts. Of the 75 SS men from other concentration camps promised by Himmler, 40 had arrived in Auschwitz at the beginning of August and were deployed to guard a total of 8,16 inmates ¹⁶². For the following

¹⁵⁵ Nümbg. doc. NI-11122, 6th construction meeting, 18.6.1941, p. 2.

¹⁵⁶ Nümbg. doc. NI-11122, 6th construction meeting, 18.6.1941, p. 6.

¹⁵⁷ Nümbg. doc. NI-11120, 5th construction meeting, May 27, 1941, p. 6.

¹⁵⁸ Nümbg. doc. NI-15093, 8th weekly report, 19.7.1941.

¹⁵⁹ Nümbg. doc. NI-15092, 7th weekly report, 12.7.1941.

¹⁶⁰ Nümbg. doc. NI-15094, 9th weekly report, 26.7.1941.

¹⁶¹ Ibid. The rail transport was to begin on July 28, 1941.

¹⁶² Nümbg. doc. NI-14543, 11th weekly report, 9.8.1941.

The plan was to increase the contingent by a further 1,000 camp inmates this week.

If the construction management wanted to keep to the tight schedule, such an increase in the workforce, which was to be joined by just as many Soviet prisoners of war¹⁶³, was also urgently needed. This was all the more true as Santo was already expecting a "construction time extension of 4-5 months" at the end of June, which resulted from the complex "pile foundation" of many of the foundations¹⁶⁴. The plant management therefore began to consider reducing the overall construction volume in order to save on materials and manpower. On the one hand, they wanted to use the modern and efficient "prefabricated reinforced concrete construction method" on a large scale, which allowed buildings to be erected much more quickly. Oberinger and Faust also considered it possible to use prisoners as laborers for this as yet untested construction method. Secondly, under the impression of the Wehrmacht's initial successes on the eastern front, the leading IG employees believed that they could largely limit the air protection measures prescribed by the Reich Aviation Ministry, "as the construction site could by no means be described as particularly vulnerable to air raids after the end of the campaign in the east"¹⁶⁵.

The use of state-of-the-art technologies and the restriction to the minimum of However, the expansion of the building fabric also appears to have become necessary for other reasons: The industrial project, originally referred to simply as the "fourth Buna plant", grew steadily in size and complexity without the available resources having increased to the same extent. At the beginning of August 1941, the construction management in Auschwitz was already working on nine individual construction sites: First, of course, were the two large complexes, the Buna factory and the fuel synthesis plant. However, in order to supply these production facilities with the necessary raw materials and energy, it was necessary to expand the Fürsten- and Piastengrube coal shafts, build a smelter and associated conveyor systems and expand the Oberlázisk power plant. The construction of a fourth carbide furnace with a connected gasification and sintering plant, which would also supply ethylene, was planned for the production of "lubricating and e-oils". Sufficient production of phenol and adipic acid was also necessary, as was the construction of a factory for chlorine chemistry, to which glycol/diglycol, acetylene and ethylene plants were attached. In order to have sufficient manpower available for all these projects, the company also participated in the expansion of the concentration camp¹⁶⁶. Without its support, it would have been impossible for the construction management to work on so many construction sites at the same time in the initial phase.

The production of synthetic fuel and rubber is a technically complex process. highly complex process, which in fact requires a large number of starting materials.

¹⁶³ Nuremberg Doc. NI-15089, 1 2nd weekly report, 16.8.1941.

¹⁶⁴ Nuremberg doc. NI-11122, 7th construction meeting, 26.6.1941.

¹⁶⁵ Nuremberg doc. NI - 111 23, 8th construction meeting, 1 5.7. 1941.

¹⁶⁶ BAB, R 8128/A 1984, p. 94 ff, 9th construction meeting, 5.8.1941.

fen is necessary¹⁶⁷. It seems unusual, however, that practically all substances were to be produced in the above-mentioned plants in Auschwitz, although only comparatively small quantities of some of them were required. In view of the variety of products that was intended for the Auschwitz plant in the final expansion, the impression therefore arises that the IG management was more interested in a highly complex factory that could be flexibly adapted to the needs of the market than in being ready for use as quickly as possible to supply the German war machine¹⁶⁸. Were the various Reich authorities in the stand

The IG had already made concessions on the issue of location - even if they ran counter to private-sector considerations¹⁶⁹ - but the design of the new production complex was now to correspond entirely to the economic interests of the IG¹⁷⁰.

Supply problems

In the summer of 1941, however, various factors initially hampered construction progress. The inadequate power supply prevented both the use of electrically powered tools and a sufficient supply of water - the capacity of the operational pumps was nowhere near sufficient. The excavation of the ten excavators used was also only around 30 percent of the targeted output, which the site management attributed to the inadequate qualifications of the personnel and the restriction of working hours¹⁷¹. Even the expected settlement of "Buchenland Germans"¹⁷², who were to strengthen the workforce as ethnic Germans, could not begin immediately as desired. First of all, simple wooden accommodation had to be erected to house them, as the number of resettlers arriving with their families had obviously been considerably misjudged.

In August 1941, the IG only had about 500 places in the camp for civilian workers, so that there was still no alternative capacity. For the following two years, however, the construction management aimed to build barracks with an initial capacity of 5,000 (1942) and then

10,000 (1943) beds at¹⁷³, which were to be distributed across various camps. In addition an apprentice camp was planned to the west of the factory boundary, directly adjacent to the "5,000-man camp" between the factory and the ready-to-go settlement. The

¹⁶⁷ On the Buna production process in Auschwitz: Nuremberg Doc. NI-1 1942, Application for the issue of the declaration of readiness for construction, May 22, 1941, p. 11.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Roth, I.G. Auschwitz, p. 84 ff.

¹⁶⁹ BAB, R 8128/A 1984, p. 79 ff., 10th construction meeting, August 26, 1941.

¹⁷⁰ Nuremberg doc. NI-11 137, 19th construction meeting, June 30, 1942, "Needs of the East", p. 2 ff.

¹⁷¹ BAB, R 81 28/A 1984, p. 79 f., 10. construction meeting, 26.8. 1941.

¹⁷² Although the SS Resettlement Staff and the IG offices had a positive attitude towards the settlement of the so-called Buchenland Germans and had been in correspondence since March 1941 (IfZ, MA- 125/ 14, p. 38827 1 - 273, RKF memorandum, 13.3. 1941), no quick solution was found. After they had come closer in October of that year with regard to the location and financing of the Buchenländersiedlung, the project finally failed at the end of July 1942: as the RFSS had apparently not succeeded in delivering the agreed 50 wooden houses, the IG now considered the matter "provisionally closed". BASF company archive, B4 - 898, Savelsberg and Dürrfeld to Butschek, 27.7. 1942.

¹⁷³ Nuremberg doc. NI-11 125, 10th construction meeting, 26.8. 1941, p. 1 ff.

Further expansion of the accommodation was already planned as the demand for labor increased; these barracks were to be built between the south-eastern edge of the town of Auschwitz and the ready ^{camp}¹⁷⁴.

The overall situation of the construction project in the fall of 1941 did not yet meet the expectations of the IG management in Auschwitz. The problems in getting the project off the ground were more serious than expected. In the construction meeting of

On October 7, 1941, Ambros and Dürrfeld therefore decided to inform Krauch "about all difficulties and impediments to the progress of construction" and their causes. In addition to the bottlenecks caused by a lack of operating materials, the deployment of prisoners and the procurement of housing, the inhibiting effect of the housing and living conditions in the Auschwitz region was also to be discussed.

on the performance and willingness of the workforce to move ⁱⁿ¹⁷⁵.

The letter signed by Ambros and Dürrfeld described in detail the construction activities of the first six months in Auschwitz. The euphoric mood of the founding meeting in April had evaporated, and the management had to admit that "the working conditions in Auschwitz were incomparably more difficult than at other plants within the Reich". While they still considered the choice of location to be very favorable from a technical and economic point of view, they were now more aware of what it meant to build a plant in Auschwitz "also for reasons of consolidating Germanness in the East". The long distances over which the building materials had to be transported and the traffic delays and interruptions caused by the "Ost feldzug" (campaign in the East) caused unexpectedly severe disruptions. In the eyes of the authors, the fact that the area around Auschwitz was at "the lowest level of civilization and culture by Reich standards" had a "devastating" effect. Despite great effort, the skilled workers needed on the construction site were not available after their deployment.

version therefore "cannot be remotely mobilized [...] by the usual means"¹⁷⁶.

In view of this difficult situation, the factory management was satisfied with what had been achieved so far and emphasized the efforts it intended to make to speed up the pace of construction in the future. In October 1941, a total of 2,700 men were deployed on the construction site. One tenth of them were Germans, half were prisoners from the concentration camp, who had thus played a much greater role in the first construction phase than originally planned. For the months of March to May 1942, the construction management aimed to increase the total number by 10,000, i.e. more than threefold. They wanted to limit the proportion of prisoners to a maximum of 30 percent. This immense expansion of the construction workforce and the granting of an "exceptional position" in all supply matters should make it possible, as Ambros and Dürrfeld were convinced, to "force" Buna and propellant production by mid-1943 as planned.

¹⁷⁴ BAB, R 8128/A 1984, p. 47 ff., 12th construction meeting, 7.10.1941.

¹⁷⁵ BAB, R 8128/A 1984, p. 50, 12th construction meeting, 7.10.1941.

¹⁷⁶ USHMM, reel 71, Ambros and Dürrfeld to Krauch, October 25, 1941.

In December 1 941, however, the cold weather initially slowed down the progress of the work. An average of just under 1,000 prisoners were now deployed at the Buna construction site, their clothing providing insufficient protection from the low temperatures. Transport between KL Auschwitz and the station in Dwory was now running quite smoothly due to the reduced Wehrmacht traffic ¹⁷⁷. "Incidentally, the days before Christmas were marked by Christmas celebrations", as the weekly report put it. While the prisoners on the factory grounds were getting frostbite, losing limbs or dying, the first big party was held in the hall of the "Seraphitenkloster" for the approximately 300 members of the IG on December 16, 1941. The mayor

had the room "repaired" especially for this purpose. Two days later, the members of the other German companies also met there. The management did not forget to maintain the important relationship with the management of the concentration camp, as can be seen from the weekly report: "On February 20, representatives of I.G. took part in the Waffen-SS's very festive and, in the end, wet and cheerful Yule celebration and on December 22 in the Christmas party (with goose dinner) of the municipal followers. Of course, we also had representatives from KL and the city to our celebration of allegiance." ¹⁷⁸ Fear of contact with the Contrary to later assurances, there were obviously no concentration camp personnel. On the contrary, the social contacts are likely to have had a positive effect on future communication in all matters of cooperation.

The first winter

In order to put Dürrfeld's ambitious program into practice, the construction management of IG Auschwitz initially tried to expand the use of prisoners, which they also wanted to use more efficiently. Despite the good relationship with the SS, however, this plan failed due to resistance from the commandant. Over the next few months, Höss had neither the manpower nor the material resources for this. Nevertheless, Dürrfeld stuck to his plan of being able to accommodate 8,000 people in the camps around the factory site by May 1, 1942 and 15,000 by July of the same year.

In order to be able to erect one barrack per day, he had 700 workers assigned to this task alone¹⁸¹.

However, due to the "expected climatic conditions", Chief Engineer Faust was sceptical from the outset as to whether this program could be realized ¹⁸². As early as mid-December, there appeared to be supply problems at various

¹⁷⁷ On the 25 working days of the month, the Reichsbahn transported a total of 24,626 prisoners and the SS guards, i.e. 986 prisoners per day. APMO, IZ- 1 3/89, Miscellaneous files of the Third Reich, p. 45; quoted from Czech, Kalendarium, p. 1 59.

m Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 5099, 31 ./32nd weekly report, 4. 1. 1 942.

¹⁷⁹ Höß had shortly before received the order to begin building a camp for 1,25,000 Russian prisoners of war; cf. chapter IV. I; APMO, D-Au III, 22nd weekly report, 27. 10.1 941; fer ner Steinbacher, "Musterstadt" Auschwitz.

¹⁸⁰ USHMM, reel 71, Ambros and Dürrfeld to Krauch, 25 .1 0.1 941.

¹⁸¹ BAB, R 81 28/A 1984, p. 39 ff., 13th construction meeting, 18.11. 1 941.

¹⁸² Nümbg. doc. NI- 15091, 26th weekly report, 23.11.1 94 1.

The plans were rendered illusory by the lack of sanitary facilities: The prefabricated parts for the barracks, which had been under construction since May 1941, did not arrive on time; sanitary facilities were almost completely unavailable. In addition, Auschwitz station was completely overloaded with 70 wagons arriving daily for the Buna factory and 120 for the concentration camp. There was chaos, as trucks could not transport more than 40 wagonloads per day - partly due to a lack of fuel - and there was a lack of storage space in the station. There were also bottlenecks in the supply of gravel and wood, which called into question the basic supply of building materials¹⁸³. A delay in the deadlines was therefore unavoidable.

Dürrfeld's hopes for a large increase in the number of employees did not seem to be fulfilled either, as Lieutenant Colonel Kirschner from the GBChem office had informed him that "Auschwitz now ranked behind Blechhammer and Heydebreck" in the allocation of labor. The special position of the large plant in Auschwitz, emphasized by all sides in the initial euphoria, obviously no longer existed. As the manpower freed up at the Dyhernfurth IG plant near Breslau was now available for Buna-IV, other options had to be sought. The construction management therefore made efforts to recruit cross-border workers from the General Government, temporary workers from French and other external companies and auxiliary workers from the Reich Labour Service (RAD) and the Organization Todt (OT)¹⁸⁴. An expansion of the use of prisoners was still out of the question due to the huge expansion of the concentration camp. The efficient employment of the already

KL inmates working on the construction site continued to suffer from the still unfinished factory fencing, which required permanent supervision¹⁸⁵.

The cold snap at the beginning of January 1942 finally led to the almost complete cessation of the work in which prisoner detachments were deployed¹⁸⁶. Despite the already low temperatures of minus 6° C on the day¹⁸⁷, the construction authorities only enforced their bad weather regulations after the frost had worsened further. While they then stopped the gravel extraction and civil engineering work, the prisoners were to continue working on the barracks. As no foundations could be laid due to the cold, these makeshift shelters were to be placed on piles. While the prisoners were freezing in their thin coats, site manager Faust managed to heat the material and gravel from the remaining piles.

¹⁸³ Nümbg. doc. NI-11130, 14th construction meeting, 16. 12. 1941, p. 1 ff.

¹⁸⁴ In the RAD, young men and women (between the ages of 18 and 25) had to complete a six-month period of service. The main areas of work for men were agriculture, road construction and clearing work, for women also agriculture and domestic work. The period of labor service served both physical pre-military training and ideological training in the Nazi sense. The OT was a special technical unit with a military order, originally set up for the construction of the Westwall. During the war, it was assigned further tasks in military construction. Its name goes back to its head, Fritz Todt, who had overseen the expansion of the Reich highways since 1933 and was Reich Minister for Armaments and Munitions from 1940 to 1942 (fatal plane crash near the Führer's headquarters in Rastenburg/East Prussia).

¹⁸⁵ Nümbg. doc. NI-11130, 14th construction meeting, 16. 12. 1941, p. 4f.

¹⁸⁶ Nümbg. doc. NI-15109, 33rd weekly report, 11. 1. 1942; at this time, only 104 prisoners were still working on the construction site.

¹⁸⁷ Nuremberg doc. NI-15119, 33rd weekly report, 11. 1. 1942.

supplies to continue the concrete work ¹⁸⁸. He tried by all means to prevent a complete halt to the construction work.

At the beginning of the new year 1942, the IG Auschwitz company regulations came into force ¹⁸⁹. The aim of the factory management was probably also to bring about a certain consolidation after the hectic initial months. After all the planning and work had initially been managed by specialists from other plants, who were only in Auschwitz for days or weeks at a time, the new plant was from now on to have a certain independence. Plant manager Otto Ambros made it clear in the foreword what special task he had in mind for the new plant: "Our plant is a bulwark of Germanness, a part of the economy of our Reich and a particularly important cell for national reconstruction in the regained East." In order to meet these requirements, he demanded that the employees not only do a good job, but also be "first and foremost idealists and loyal followers of the Führer". Consequently, only people who were able to join the "company community"

Those who were "of unblemished character, of Aryan descent, members of the German Labor Front and, according to a factory doctor's report, suitable for their job" ¹⁹⁰. Prisoners, who until then had made up the largest share of the construction site, were therefore excluded for various reasons. For one

After all, it was not enough to be a "follower" if "you only work; on the right working spirit" in the "community" was essential¹⁹¹. In Auschwitz, the factory management therefore had "no use for outsiders who would prevent us from fulfilling the great tasks assigned to our company" ¹⁹².

However, the special importance that had initially been attached to the new factory by the state had obviously diminished somewhat. Göring's decree of January 7, 1942 confirmed the downgrading of the Buna part of the Auschwitz plant, as now only the labor requirements for mineral oil plants were 100 percent guaranteed¹⁹³. After discussions between the IG management and Krauch and the responsible labor office, the plans for the Auschwitz plant were adapted to the new circumstances: Instead of the originally planned 14,000 workers, only 10,000 were to be deployed in the course of 1942.

Together with the reduced material allocations, this had to result in a lead to a considerable delay in construction progress. This was completely contrary to Dürrfeld's ideas, which is why he looked for other ways to get additional personnel to Auschwitz.

Since the beginning of the war, it was actually quite clearly regulated how a company could obtain workers. The usual way for the factory management was to rely on "special advantages".

¹⁸⁸ Nümbg. doc. NI-11131, 15th construction meeting, 22.1.1942, p. 1 f.

¹⁸⁹ Here and for the following quotations: Nümbg. doc. NI-14488, Works Regulations of IG Auschwitz, 1.1.1942, S. 5 f.

¹⁹⁰ Nümbg. doc. NI-14488, Works Regulations of IG Auschwitz, 1.1.1942, p. 7.

¹⁹¹ Nümbg. doc. NI-14488, Works Regulations of IG Auschwitz, 1.1.1942, p. 11.

¹⁹² Nümbg. doc. NI-14488, Works Regulations of IG Auschwitz, January 1, 1942, p. 22.

¹⁹³ Nümbg. doc. NI-11131, 15. construction meeting, 22.1.1942, p. 1.

¹⁹⁴ Nümbg. doc. NI-15118, 36th weekly report, 1.2.1942.

print" of the employment office to apply for the required number. Such a "Requests to the employment office were the basis for every allocation of workers to a company" ¹⁹⁵. Depending on the urgency of the individual projects, the authority then allocated quotas from its labor pool. If no more workers were available, it reallocated them between the companies or tried to "recruit" new workers in the occupied territories. The latter procedure was extended more and more from 1941 onwards, so that the proportion of foreign workers was soon particularly high in Upper Silesia. The procurement of workers in France, Italy or the countries of Eastern Europe was a matter for the Reich authorities; independent recruitment directly by the companies was officially no longer possible. Dürrfeld was not deterred by such regulations, however, and "naturally continued to look for workers. that was his lifeblood", as a colleague from management later recalled¹⁹⁶. Employees from his personnel department therefore also made representations in various European capitals, where they greatly benefited from their close relationships with IGChem, which had offices there. After their trips to Rome and Paris at the beginning of 1942, for example five to six hundred French and one thousand Italian workers to Auschwitz ¹⁹⁷.

The IG Executive Board also continued to participate in the systematic search for additional labor contingents. On the one hand, of course, the connections to Krauch were used, who "responded to the special wishes and complaints of the I.G.-Farbenindustrie A.G. took "the greatest possible consideration", as a senior employee of the Chemicals Economic Group reported¹⁹⁸. The person responsible at IGChem, Otto Kirschner, proved himself to be a good recruiter of foreign workers, even in the eyes of employees of the Reich Labor Office.

ministry as "extremely radical and very active in concluding contracts" ¹⁹⁹. His unscrupulous approach even "sometimes gave rise to complaints" from the Reich authorities. But Kirschner was not alone, his method was systematic: to support him, IG representatives appeared "very unpleasantly" and "penetratingly" in the various Berlin offices in order to lend the necessary emphasis to their demands for workers.

The good relations with IGChem were the most important, but not the only source from which the IG drew. The "smaller reservoir" of workers, over whose use the Chemical Industry Group had to decide, was also "gladly and frequently utilized", especially by ter Meer as its deputy head. He undoubtedly used his "position to gain advantages for the company he represented (I.G.-Farbenindustrie A.G.) over other companies".

¹⁹⁵ Nuremberg Doc. NI-5670, Stothfang testimony, March 28, 1947, p. 1.

¹⁹⁶ Nürnberg. doc. NI-14721, statement by Braus, 19.8. 1947, p. 4.

¹⁹⁷ Nuremberg doc. NI-14287, Rossbach statement, January 21, 1948, p. 7.

¹⁹⁸ Nuremberg Doc. NI-5953, Ehrmann statement, April 30, 1947, p. 2.

¹⁹⁹ Nuremberg doc. NI-6061, Hildebrandt testimony, 8.2. 1947, p. 3 ff.

to secure their chemical companies in the procurement of foreign labor", as was well known in the economic group²⁰⁰. However, the IG leadership was not satisfied with the priority allocation of civilian workers. Instead, efforts were made to regain the exceptional status granted at the start of the Buna project for the preferential allocation of prisoner contingents. By the time the WVHA took up its official duties in February 1 942 at the latest, the "friendly relations" between Ambros and Himmler seem to have ensured that the Auschwitz plant was once again given the desired "priority in the deployment of prisoners"²⁰¹.

While the winter of 1941/42 had brought almost nothing but setbacks, the situation actually began to slowly improve at the beginning of spring. By the beginning of March, the construction workforce had already grown to 5,000 men. The construction of the barracks had progressed surprisingly quickly due to the interruption of other work caused by the weather, so that 4,600 people could now already be accommodated in these temporary buildings²⁰². The supply of barrack parts flowed continuously from the spring onwards, so that it was now also possible to proceed with the expansion of the planned camps. The construction management once again increased the targeted total number of beds from 15,000 to 20,000 and ordered its own delousing facility to prevent the introduction of epidemics²⁰³. After the frost period was over, an examination of the load-bearing capacity of the building ground finally showed that buildings that could withstand a certain amount of "settlement" could also be erected with simple foundations without pile foundations. This allowed savings to be made on personnel and materials that were urgently needed elsewhere.

The long-awaited involvement of the Organization Todt in the construction work was also finally realized in the spring of 1 942. To this end, the factory management set up a separate "O.T. Auschwitz Construction Management", which was to be responsible for the organizational handling and construction of "defined construction phases" up to a total of 15 million RM. In contrast, the deployment of prisoners unexpectedly stagnated at only around 100 men, which Faust attributed primarily to a lack of transportation options. He wanted to remedy this by procuring 12 passenger cars and 45 freight cars and laying a direct track from the concentration camp into the factory grounds²⁰⁴. Warmer weather and transportation by rail actually led to an increase in the number of prisoners on the construction site in the following weeks. At the beginning of April 1 942, 750 inmates from the concentration camp were again working as construction workers for the IG²⁰⁵. By the beginning of May, this figure had risen to 1,600²⁰⁶, taking the number of prisoners to a new high. However, the total number of workers was even higher,

²⁰⁰ Nümbg. doc. NI-5953, statement by Ehnnann, 30.4. 1 947, p. 1 f.

²⁰¹ Nümbg. doc. NI-382, Pohl statement, August 5, 1946. p. 3.

²⁰² Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 1 1 32, 16th construction meeting, March 6, 1942, p. 4 f.

²⁰³ Nümbg. doc. NI-1 1 1 32, 16th construction meeting, 6.3. 1942, p. 1 0.

²⁰⁴ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 1 1 32, 16th construction meeting, March 6, 1942, p. 4 ff.

²⁰⁵ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 1 1 33, 17th construction meeting, 8.4. 1942, p. 3.

²⁰⁶ BAB, R 81 28/A 2003, Leuna to Simmler, 5.5. 1 942.

namely to 8,750. Compared to October 1941, when 1,350 of the 2,700 workers were seconded from the concentration camp, their share had fallen from 50 to a little under 20 percent.

Sufficient accommodation for workers was now available, as Dürrfeld's construction program of 15,000 barrack beds had apparently been overfulfilled. Instead of being available in the fall, these capacities were already available in mid-May 1942, albeit with tight occupancy and unfinished sanitary and supply facilities²⁰⁷. The construction management therefore interrupted the rapid expansion, in which up to 1,000 workers were deployed, as they expected a withdrawal of workers over the next few months. After sufficient accommodation had been created for the time being, the IG managers reallocated the existing personnel to the various construction projects in order to make progress on the factory buildings in particular. The earthmoving required for this was well behind schedule due to "inadequate excavation work". While sufficient technical equipment was available, there was a lack of fuel and, above all, a shortage of manpower. Despite the sharp increase in the workforce, the construction management identified a shortfall of 2,700 workers compared to its target. At the end of May 1942, the management of IG Auschwitz therefore complained that the labor contingents promised by Krauch had not materialized. Of the 7,000 forced laborers announced from Croatia, Belgium, France and the Governor General's Office, as well as a contingent of Soviet prisoners of war, only 230 French and 40 Belgians had arrived. In contrast, the placement of 1,140 temporary workers from Italian companies, also initiated by GBChem, went smoothly²⁰⁸.

New difficulties

The extensive ground investigations of the construction site had meanwhile revealed that, according to the plans available in spring 1942, a total of 20 440 piles had to be driven, of which only 6 521, i.e. less than a third, had been installed by then. In May, this very complex process of building the foundations led to the entire construction project in Auschwitz being called into question once again. At a meeting in Berlin, a representative of the Ministry of Armaments and Munitions, now headed by Albert Speer, criticized the "pile foundation" method, which was not necessary at other sites²⁰⁹. According to Chief Engineer Santo, however, in a subsequent meeting he succeeded in emphasizing the many advantages of the Auschwitz site. After more than a year of construction, it was quickly agreed that "relocation [...] was no longer an option, as the resulting loss of time could no longer be made up for"²¹⁰.

Due to the extremely tight raw materials situation – GBChem was not even able to sell a fifth of the registered mi-

²⁰⁷ Here and in the following: Nümbg. doc. NI- 11 136, 18th construction meeting, 15.5. 1942, p. 1.

²⁰⁸ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 4550, 53rd weekly report, 31 .5.1942.

²⁰⁹ Nümbg. doc. NI-11 136, 18th construction meeting, 15.5.1 942, p. 3 f.

²¹⁰ Nümbg. doc. NI-111 36, 18th construction meeting, 15.5.1942, p. 3.

nimal requirements for the third quarter of 1942 – the responsible ministries were to be informed once again about the urgency of the "Auschwitz construction site". While, in Ambras' opinion, the fuel production planned there could also be taken over by Heydebreck and Blechhammer, German Buna production would only cover demand at the moment – with very limited stocks. The production of methanol envisaged in the "Munitions Plan"

and diglycol would, as Ambros went on to explain, only have been possible in Auschwitz. "air-protected" ^{21 1}. With these arguments, the IG representatives succeeded in securing the continued construction of the combination plant in Auschwitz. However, the changed weighting of individual parts of the plant resulting from the meeting led to a "new priority planning". This was intended to ensure optimal utilization of the available material and personnel according to wartime economic criteria. Accordingly, completion of the synthesis section was postponed for the time being in order to advance ethylene and methanol production²¹².

As the supply situation became critical, the factory management once again began to consider how the use of prisoners on the construction site could be made more efficient. In a meeting with Commandant Höß on June 2, 1942, Faust negotiated the introduction of "a kind of piecework system to increase the prisoners' workload". Upon fulfillment

In accordance with certain performance criteria, it was intended to offer camp inmates the prospect of various benefits^{21 3}. In addition, measures were taken to reduce the number of SS men needed to guard the prisoners. To this end, it was agreed to build a "factory enclosure" with watchtowers on which SS posts were to take up position. Inside the fence, the prisoners would be They would then be able to move freely and according to the requirements of their work. The SS would no longer guard them directly at their workplace, but would only send them on patrols through the factory premises²¹⁴. One month later the "factory enclosure" was completed with 24 "guard booths", which were mainly grouped around the gates of the construction site²¹⁵.

Exactly at the point in time when you have the external conditions for a However, the opposite development occurred when Hitler believed he had created a more efficient use of the inmates. Hitler's insistence on making the Reich "free of Jews" ^{21 6} meant that all Polish non-Jewish inmates were transferred to the concentration camps of the old Reich in July 1942. All Jewish prisoners held there, on the other hand, were transferred to the camps in the east. When the prisoners were deployed by IG Auschwitz, there was therefore a

²¹¹ Nümbg. doc. NI- 111 36, 18th construction meeting, 15.5.1942, p. 4.

²¹² Nümbg. doc. NI- 11136, 18th construction meeting, 15.5.1942, p. 5.

²¹³ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1451 0, 54th weekly report, 7.6. 1942, p. 13; cf. also Chap. V. I.

²¹⁴ Nümbg. doc. NI- 14523, 55th weekly report, 14.6.1942.

²¹⁵ Nümbg. doc. NI-15120, 58th/59th weekly report, 12.7.1942.

²¹⁶ Hitler's push to make the Reich 'Judenfrei' (free of Jews) seems to have reached a new peak in the spring and summer of 1942; see Hauner, Chronology, pp. 174 and 176; also Buchheim et al, Anatomie, vol. 2, p. 318.

permanent fluctuation of the workforce, which brought untrained personnel to the construction site almost daily and brought work to a near standstill in some cases²¹⁷. Construction progress was further hindered by the forced transfer of 1,320 men to the construction site in Brück, which was carried out on the instructions of the IGChem. Although, after "arduous negotiations", practically complete quantitative compensation was achieved through the reallocation of labor.

This exchange had also caused a further delay²¹⁸. Since May, there had also been no further increase in building occupancy. Including the prisoners, at the beginning of Ju

Around 8,500 construction workers and around 2,700 employees were working on the site. Due to the multiple changes of workers, their temporary absence and inadequate replacements, the construction management was significantly behind schedule. In particular, the disruption to the production of prefabricated concrete components pushed back the completion dates for many buildings by several weeks²¹⁹.

Further difficulties in deploying the prisoners now led to concrete plans to build a large camp directly on the factory premises. It was hoped that this measure would allow the prisoners to be used "in large groups and on shifts". In particular, the IG engineers wanted to run the "prefabricated concrete workshops" exclusively with prisoners and achieve higher production by introducing shift work²²⁰. However, before these plans could be put into practice, the use of prisoners came to a complete standstill. On July 20, 1942, Obersturmführer Schwarz, head of the Auschwitz concentration camp, imposed a limited camp closure due to a typhus epidemic that had broken out in the main camp. Consequently, from July 21, 1942, no more prisoners were allowed to march onto the IG grounds for work²²¹. Two days later, Commandant Höß issued a complete camp closure to prevent the epidemic from spreading beyond the main camp and Birkenau²²².

Himmler's second visit to Auschwitz

Two days before the first camp closure was imposed, the Reichsführer SS, accompanied by SS-Obergruppenführer Sehmauser and Höß, who had just been appointed SS-Ober Sturmbannführer, came to Auschwitz for his second visit²²³. After an overview of the overall layout of the IG construction site, Himmler inquired about the "expected start dates, which were given as May to August 1943". When asked, the IG construction management stated that due to problems with the provision of materials and labor, despite large

²¹⁷ Nuremberg doc. NI- 145 12, 58th/59th weekly report, 12.7. 1942.

²¹⁸ Nuremberg doc. NI-1 11 37, 19th construction meeting, 13.7. 1942, p. 5 ff.

²¹⁹ Nuremberg doc. NI- 15085, 60./61. weekly report, 26.7.1 942.

²²⁰ Nuremberg doc. NI-1 11 37, 19th construction meeting, 13.7. 1942, p. 7.

²²¹ Nürnberg. doc. NI- 1455 1, 60th/61st weekly report, 26.7.1 942.

²²² Location and commandant's orders, StB 19/42, 23.7. 1942.

²²³ Nuremberg Doc. NI-1455 1, 60th/61st weekly report, 26.7.1 942, p. 2 f.

no acceleration was to be expected. As the discussion progressed, it became clear what different perspectives Himmler on the one hand and the IG management on the other had for the new plant. While the RFSS pushed for production to start as quickly as possible, for example by using proven plans from the three existing Buna plants, the IG insisted on the implementation of operational improvements, even if they had an impact on the building design. Apparently, the IG representatives succeeded in convincing Himmler, who was impressed by the modern production methods, of their project. In any case, the visit ended with the almost customary renewal of a comprehensive offer of support for the factory during the visit of SS greats.

However, the management of IG Auschwitz did not reveal the real reasons for the highly complex construction of the Auschwitz plant, which in fact required a considerable extension of the construction period. The immense investment in East Upper Silesia was not intended to serve a mere armaments project that would become more or less useless after a short production period²²⁴. Rather, the state-funded plants for synthetic fuel and rubber were only intended to form the basis for a broad range of chemical products. There is evidence of such considerations in the reports on negotiations with other industrial companies. Talks had already taken place in January 1942 with Dynamit AG²²⁵, which was looking for a new plant location. The IG representatives cited the following as a clear advantage of the location for a relocation

"in the East", "that Auschwitz could act as a supplier of the necessary raw materials, such as phenol, formaldehyde and later plastics"²²⁶. Accordingly, the Dynamit managers were also given a recommendation for a potentially suitable site near Chelm-Innelin.

In the summer of the same year, Otto Ambros outlined the IG's long-term perspective in more detail at an internal meeting. The focus was less on the products Buna, fuels and methanol required for the war effort than on the ease with which these plants could be converted to meet post-war needs once the current shortages of crude oil and natural rubber were available again in sufficient quantities. He therefore regarded the Buna plants primarily as "germ cells for aldehyde chemistry", whose freed-up capacities "could then be used to advantage in the solvent sector for the needs of the East"²²⁷. The fuel and methanol production was also designed in such a way that the raw material advantages of eastern Upper Silesia could be used for other products without costly conversions. This variable design of the large-scale chemical plant in Auschwitz with its large economic profit margins

²²⁴ Nuremberg Doc. NI-11 109, Struss testimony, p. 6: "It was clear to I.G. that the Buna was a bad project and [it would] never [have] taken a thousand million R.M. for Buna."

²²⁵ Dynamit AG was a subsidiary of IG Farbenindustrie AG.

²²⁶ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1113 1, 15th construction meeting, January 22, 1942, p. 7.

²²⁷ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 1137, 19th construction meeting, July 13, 1942, p. 4 f.

The fact that the IG planners were able to sift out the production of the first products for the period after the end of the war outweighed the delay in the start of production criticized by Himmler.

The situation in the summer of 1942

Due to the many supply bottlenecks and unexpected difficulties, the work in Auschwitz had fallen well behind the original schedule in the summer of 1942. The complete loss of the prisoner detachments from July onwards had further exacerbated the situation, even though the nominal number of workers had been reduced by

September increased steadily. The total workforce, including salaried employees now amounted to 13,359, an increase of more than 2,000 compared to July 1, 1942²²⁸. The large construction site of IG Auschwitz had thus become the size of a medium-sized small

The population of Auschwitz has already surpassed that of the city.

At the end of the summer, 8 1 06 workers were actually engaged in construction work. Of these, around one third were skilled workers, the remaining two thirds unskilled workers. In addition, there were around 500 engineers, employees, foremen and other specialists from the construction and assembly companies commissioned by the IG. The construction management had divided the entire complex into 17 individual projects, each of which had different numbers of workers available: Even 15 months after the start of construction, the earthworks and excavation work continued to require the most manpower with 1,235 men. The supply lines and sewage system required 943 workers. Between 700 and 900 people were employed on the buildings for the power and water plants and the synthesis and Buna production units. More than 600 men were still employed on the construction of roads inside and outside the factory premises. The work on the barrack camps, buildings for offices, the fire department, apprentices, the canteen and material stores tied up a further 800 or so men. A total of 663 workers were involved in the construction of the "Bereitschafts siedlung" and the renovation of old housing. A further 1,00 men converted the former Salesian monastery in the town of Auschwitz into a hospital. In addition, contingents worked in gravel extraction, unloading the wagons and on the estates belonging to the construction site.

The rest of the workforce consisted of 594 engineers and salaried employees as well as 72 foremen from the IG. Only 76 auxiliary staff worked in the administration. Around 400 people were involved in maintaining the infrastructure of the construction site, including drivers, transportation workers, electricians, plumbers and sanitation workers. The commercial enterprises, which were responsible for providing the workforce with the necessities of life, employed 469 people, more than 80 percent of whom were women. The maintenance of communal camps I to III alone required around 450 workers, the majority of whom were women.

Of the target workforce of 13,359, 1,683 people were not at work at this time. After deducting the 373 men on leave, this represents an unusually high shortfall of around ten percent. While

²²⁸ BAB, R 8 128/A 2003, p. 68 ff., Overview of the workforce of IG Auschwitz, 2.9.1 942. From this also the following information.

While the number of people absent due to illness remained within the usual range at around five percent, almost as many were absent from work "without excuse". The working and living conditions on the construction site evidently caused a considerable proportion of the workforce to suffer a drop in morale. In addition, information about the conditions in Auschwitz was

had already penetrated far into the occupied eastern territories, where they did not prevent the recruitment of further foreign workers, but made it considerably more difficult²²⁹. German workers also refused "on various occasions" to work "in I.G. Auschwitz

because of the conditions prevailing there (including the ruthless use of prisoners)", as the management was well aware²³⁰.

At the next construction meeting at the beginning of September, Dürrfeld expressed his satisfaction with the development of the workforce, as the targeted number of employees had been reached.

height "almost on schedule", even if their performance did not meet his expectations²³¹. In order to still be able to meet the deadlines for commissioning the various parts of the plant, he had worked out a comprehensive concept for redistributing resources with the construction management. All individual projects were then divided into three classes according to their urgency: There were "priority buildings", "priority buildings" and "non-priority buildings".

buildings". Only those construction phases that fell into the first category had the prospect of meeting all of the personnel and material requirements in the following months²³². This led to a shift in the workforce between the individual construction site sections. Priority was given to projects that needed to be completed by the onset of winter so that the finishing and assembly work could then be continued under cover. These included work on the production buildings for Buna and Synthesis, the power plant, road construction and, in particular, the earthworks and sewerage work. The personnel required for this was drawn from the "settlement" and "barrack camp construction" areas. The capacity of this temporary residential town had already reached the level specified by Dürrfeld. In September 1942, 7,000 free beds were available there, even though work on the sewage system and sanitary facilities had not yet been completed in some areas. Camp IV, in which the

Auschwitz inmates were to be housed there was "finished except for the double fencing"²³³. On the other hand, Dürrfeld had announced to the responsible authorities that there would be a "steep increase in the demand for labor" in the following weeks. The construction management therefore pressed for the allocation of further contingents: in order to fill the gap of 7,000 missing locksmiths, they applied for the allocation of Russian "Eastern workers" and prisoners of war. In the Governor-General's

²²⁹ Nümbg. doc, Case VI, PS-84, Report of the Central Office for Members of the Eastern Peoples, Dr. Gutkelch, 20.9.1942.

²³⁰ Nümbg. doc. NI-14287, Rossbach statement, 21. 1. 1948, p. 4.

²³¹ Nümbg. doc. NI-11138, 20th construction meeting, 8.9.1942, p. 2.

²³² Nümbg. doc. NI-11139, 21st construction meeting, 3. 1. 1942, p. 5 ff.

²³³ Nümbg. doc. NI-11138, 20th construction meeting, 8.9.1942, p. 6.

nement, the IG recruited Serbs and Poles and expanded the use of French and Italian companies with its own workforce.

Another project was finally postponed in October 1942 "due to the war situation": The construction of a cableway to transport the coal from the mines to the plant had been discussed since June 1941 because the costs for delivery were significantly lower than for possible rail transport²³⁴. However, the increasingly difficult material situation and the necessary and time-consuming construction measures made the project increasingly unlikely in the following months. Perhaps because the management of IG Auschwitz would still have liked to build a cable car for economic and technical reasons, it made a very convincing case in the wage negotiations with the Reichsbahn: Although, in the opinion of the IG management, the Reichsbahn had a good chance of completely preventing the construction of a cable car by lodging an objection with the Reich authorities, its representatives were evidently impressed by the IG's negotiating style. On the condition that the company refrained from building a cable car, the Reichsbahn wanted to grant it a "freight discount" of 20 percent²³⁵. While the leading managers of IG Auschwitz had already agreed to accept this offer for a period of four years in December 1941, the official agreement with the Reichsbahn was then openly protracted for a further ten months.

The pile foundations had also made progress, so that only a fifth of the 20,000 or so piles remained to be installed²³⁶. By September 1942, the large special machines were ramming these foundations into ground that did not belong to IG. It was not until a year and a half after the start of construction that the Kattowitz Land Office and the construction management agreed on a price for the land on which IG Auschwitz was to be built. The approximately 2,000 hectares were transferred to the company for a total price of RM 4 million, including living and dead inventory²³⁷. By the time the land became the legal property of IG Auschwitz, however, its appearance had already changed fundamentally compared to the beginning of 1941. The report on the 21st construction meeting, written almost two months later, provided an overview of the construction activity to date: a total of 128,000 cubic meters of earth had been moved, which, together with the 153,000 cubic meters of gravel pit spoil, accounted for around 55 percent of the planned "total mass movement". Of the planned roads, 61 percent were completed, which corresponded to an asphalted area of 73,000 square meters²³⁸. Despite the immense volume of work completed, in November 1942 the site management was still occupied with civil engineering and the infrastructure of the factory site. The assembly of the operating facilities had

²³⁴ Nümbg. doc. NI- 11122, 7th construction meeting, 26.6. 1941, p. 4.

²³⁵ Nümbg. doc. NI-11130, 14. construction meeting, 16. 12.1941, p. 11.

²³⁶ Nümbg. doc. NI- 11138, 20th construction meeting, 8.9.1942, p. 6.

²³⁷ Nümbg. doc. NI-11138, 20th construction meeting, 8.9.1942, pp. 12-18.

²³⁸ Nümbg. doc. NI-11139, 21st construction meeting, 3.11.1942, p. 3.

work had already begun on a few buildings, but only a few workers were employed there.

Nevertheless, plant manager Dürrfeld was reasonably satisfied with the way 1942 had gone so far. He had been able to defend the overall concept of the large chemical plant in Auschwitz against attacks from the Ministry of Armaments and Munitions and against Himmler's insistence. The influx of workers had met his expectations and had almost made up for the loss of prisoners since July. As he could count on their deployment again from November, he was obviously confident that he would be able to keep to the tight schedule of arrival dates. This impression is also conveyed by a brochure that Dürrfeld had produced at this time as part of a nationwide competition.

"Power struggle"

In December 1942, the IG Auschwitz plant participated for the first time in the "war performance campaign of German companies". The plant manager Walther Dürrfeld and the plant chairman Fritz Schuster published a report on this, which provided an overview of the

The report was intended to provide an overview of what had been "achieved in terms of performance despite the existing difficulties" in the one and a half years since construction began²³⁹. Although undoubtedly written as a success story, it provides fairly direct access to the intentions and goals of the management. The introduction already reveals surprisingly openly that the Auschwitz plant was by no means planned and built as a mere armaments factory from the IG's point of view. Rather, it was to fulfill a dual function as a "major plant of the German chemical industry" on the one hand and an "important factor for German war production and supplying the European continent" on the other. Apparently unimpressed by Himmler's insistence on a quick and simple construction method and with hopes still unbroken for a large European sales market in the East, the economic intentions of the IG planners were formulated here.

After a brief description of the construction progress, which was said to be on schedule until the winter of 1942/43, the engineers gave a picture of the complex and unusual design of the entire plant. At the Auschwitz plant, "the synthesis of Buna was to be coupled with the production of fuels for the first time". The reasons for this construction experiment, which seemed somewhat astonishing at the beginning of the fourth year of the war, lay precisely in the interests of the IG management, which extended far beyond the war: "Combining the synthesis of hydrocarbons, solvents and plasticizers with that of polymerization in one place opens up immense development opportunities for peacetime."²⁴⁰

Despite emphasizing the technical achievements and plans, the authors did not forget to emphasize once again that they "were also given a political task, namely that of building a *bulwark of Germanness* here against

²³⁹ Here and in the following: APMO, D-Au III, Monowitz, 9c, 'Leistungskampf', here p. 1 b.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 6.

the East"²⁴¹. In the eyes of the management, "maintaining efficiency" was one of the foundations of this project; political goals and economic necessity were seamlessly intertwined. In cooperation with the German Labor Front (DAF), the aim was to "combat the inadequate work performance of the "Volksdeutsche" and foreign workers" through a "vocational training program". The partly "extremely poor knowledge of the German language" of the "ethnic German workers from the surrounding, formerly almost entirely Polish area" was to be improved through evening classes²⁴². In addition to the hope of increased efficiency, this also led to the "Germanization" of the area around Auschwitz.

In view of the "general war conditions" and the "particular urgency" of the construction project, the factory management considered it necessary to provide a certain amount of compensation through "increased social benefits". This seemed all the more justified as the "renunciation of the civilization and culture of life to which they were accustomed at home" was added to the high workload²⁴³. In order to minimize the associated consequences for the well-being of the "followers", the management did everything possible to provide "pleasant and healthy workplaces"²⁴⁴. What then follows reads like mockery against the backdrop of the miserable living and working conditions of the foreign workers and, above all, the prisoners: In addition to the concern for sufficient "appropriate relaxation" and adequate lighting, the factory management endeavored to achieve "a friendly workplace environment by creating strips of meadow, planting shrubs and trees to balance the climate and by neatly inserting field crops".

For the "office barracks camp" and the "workers' camp", "measures concerning the beauty of work and living" were planned²⁴⁵. Performance was also to be maintained through the issue of protective clothing, strict accident prevention regulations and in some cases even paid special leave "as a preventative measure against illness"²⁴⁶. Anyone who nevertheless fell ill was treated in "hygienically exemplary nursing stations", where several examination and treatment rooms were available. Overall, special attention was paid to the "construction of sanitary facilities"²⁴⁷. In order to avoid illnesses caused by the bacteriologically unsafe water, the canteens served mineral water for all workers (with the exception of prisoners) from²⁴⁸. More extreme

²⁴¹ Ibid., p. 3, emphasis in original.

²⁴² Ibid, p. 17.

²⁴³ Ibid., p. 19 f.

²⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 22.

²⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 23.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 27 f.

²⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 37.

²⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 35.

the differences between the prisoners' camps and the "followers' camps".

The intellectual well-being of the workforce was obviously also close to the management's heart. In addition to cinema screenings, plays by the Spielschar and concerts by the works orchestra, there were many events in cooperation with the DAF organization Kraft durch Freude (KdF). Variety shows, plays and concerts were organized every one to two weeks, especially in the factory's community hall²⁴⁹. Despite the restrictions imposed by the wartime conditions, the factory management was satisfied with what had been achieved so far. From the company's point of view, at any rate, according to the closing words, the establishment of the social work program was a "guarantee that the Auschwitz plant would become a company that could be proudly called and rightly must be described as a community filled with the spirit of National Socialist work"²⁵⁰.

Ethnic diversity in Auschwitz

Contrary to all efforts and declarations of intent to bring German culture and civilization to East Upper Silesia, the construction of the chemical plant initially set a completely different development in motion. While more and more Germans were drafted into the Wehrmacht, the high demand for labor brought an ever-increasing number of people of foreign nationality to Auschwitz. By the end of 1942, the barrack camp around the factory site had grown to a capacity of 20,000 beds, of which Germans only occupied a small proportion. Of the total workforce of the Auschwitz plant, which on

Although there were 20,555 people on November 15, 1942, they accounted for just under a quarter of the workforce, and only 21 percent of workers²⁵¹. In contrast, Germans made up almost 84 percent of the small number of white-collar workers.

Almost half of the construction workers, namely 9,061 people or more than 46 percent, were of Polish nationality; of these, around 80 percent came from the immediate vicinity, with the remainder coming from the Generalgouvernement. The second largest group was made up of Germans, with a total of 4 1 20 workers, including school leavers and "Jungwerker" (trainees). This was followed by the so-called Ostarbeiter and Ostarbeiterinnen (1667), who had been assigned "with children and infants" by the labor office in August 1942²⁵². Italians (1,089) and Frenchmen (963) had been in Auschwitz since the spring of 1,942. Croats (863), Belgians (203), Western Ukrainians (1 12) and Czechs (69) completed the list of nationalities.

Just two weeks after the opening of the "Buna camp", 1,388 prisoners were already working there. Over the course of the following year, more Croats, Belarusians and English prisoners of war were added. Towards the end of the year In 1943, after "incessant insistence" by IG "at every possible point", "so-called Schmelt Poles" also joined IG Auschwitz²⁵³. The Barak

²⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 56.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 62.

²⁵¹ Ibid., p. 64; see also Table 1 in the appendix.

²⁵² Nümbg. doc. NI- 14287, Rossbach statement, January 21, 1948, p. 8.

²⁵³ Ibid.

kenstadt, which extended around the factory site, was therefore a place of international diversity. This was evident not only in the colorful mix and coexistence of languages, but also in the various kitchens, which each ethnic group ran as far as possible according to their own ideas²⁵⁴. Their accommodation was not random, but in accordance with the position of the respective nationality within the Nazi racial ideology. Each of the eight camps therefore had its own "character", which was determined as much by national characteristics as by the respective living and catering conditions. All camps were fenced in and no one was allowed to leave after 10 p.m.²⁵⁵.

Camp I housed Germans and Flemings, who found comparatively good living conditions in modern wooden barracks. There was apparently no difference in the treatment of the two nationalities. The workers received identical rations and ate their meals together. As in all camps on the Buna site, the main meal was served in the camp canteen in the evening. As a rule, it consisted of "soup, meat, vegetables and potatoes", and twice a week there was a stew. Lunch, the so-called Bau- or Buna-Suppe, was eaten by all workers, apart from the managerial staff, in the office. However, the quality of this soup varied considerably depending on which kitchen was responsible for preparing it. While the German and Western European workers received a hearty soup with meat and vegetables, the nutritional value of the Eastern workers was already greatly reduced. In the end, the prisoners only received a watery broth with half-rotten and inedible vegetables. After the evening meal, the workers got their "cold rations", as breakfast was called in construction site jargon. In Camp I there was also the "construction company canteen", which served as a meeting place for the external companies contracted by the IG, and a diet kitchen, which prepared a light diet centrally for all camps except the concentration camp.

Camp II had two completely different kitchens. One was for The other half, on the other hand, housed Poles from the border region of the Generalgouvernement, whose rations were even lower than those of the prisoners. Consequently, they only had stew, which could hardly satisfy their hunger. It was only by receiving food parcels from their relatives and friends that these Polish workers were able to supplement their diet enough to survive the hard labor.

Camp III was also divided into two halves. On the one hand, there were so-called Schmeltjuden, whose status was similar to that of the concentration camp prisoners. However, they wore a special type of prisoner clothing with yellow stripes to distinguish them. The IG-Wirtschaftsbetriebe supplied the food directly to the kitchen. A leader of the organization was in charge of the camp.

²⁵⁴ The following account is based on Nümbg. doc. NI-98 10, Reinhold statement, August 19, 1 947, p. 1 ff. From May 1 942, Paul Reinhold was head of the "economic operations" of IG Auschwitz, whose main task was to supply the workforce with food.

²⁵⁵ Nuremberg doc. NI- 1 4287, Rossbach statement, January 21, 1 948, p. 8.

Todt organization. The other part was occupied by "Eastern workers" who prepared their own rations. Camp IV was the "Buna camp" or Monowitz concentration camp, which will be discussed in more detail below.

"Eastern workers", Ukrainians and Poles made up the staff of Camp V. The rations of the first two groups were slightly higher than those of the Poles until 1944, after which they converged. English prisoners of war who came to Auschwitz from October 1943 lived in Camp VI, which was supervised by the Wehrmacht. Their rations were between those for Germans and those for prisoners. Red Cross parcels improved their rations considerably, however, so that they sometimes left meals from the camp kitchen.

German workers lived in the other barracks. Apprentices and commercial employees lived in Camp VII, other German workers and Wehrmacht helpers in Camp VIII. From 1943, the rations for the "foreign workers" were divided into three groups in order to increase productivity with performance-based rations. After just a few months, the factory management abolished the system again after it had "not proven itself in practice".

In the international camp town of IG Auschwitz, there was little sign of the special responsibility that the factory wanted to assume for its employees in view of the high physical and psychological demands during the reconstruction period. The "special attention" for "preservation" and "restoration of the Health" did not actually apply to all workers, but only to the German "followers"²⁵⁶. The classification of a labor group within the hierarchy of National Socialist racial ideology could be felt in all areas of life at IG Auschwitz. This was already evident in the spatial arrangement of the residential camps²⁵⁷: Camp I (also known as "Leonhard Haag") was located at the north-eastern end of the factory premises. Right next to it were the buildings for the ambulance, plant security and the office blocks. The residential units for the employees and apprentices were located directly to the south, along the eastern boundary of the factory. Camp III ("Teich grund") had already been built by the site management a little further away, in the south-east corner of the factory premises. The British prisoners of war in Camp VI ("Pulver turn") were housed just under two kilometers further east on Works Road J, which marked the southern end of the construction site. Along the same road, about one kilometer further east, one reached prisoner camp IV ("edge of the village"), which was thus at a "safe" distance from the other housing units.

The amount of rations, the size of the allocated living space, working conditions, clothing and the opportunity to participate in cultural events were also derived from this categorization. Due to the diversity of national origins, this system was shaped within IG Auschwitz like hardly any other place in everyday life. It also prevailed at

²⁵⁶ APMO, D-Au III, Monowitz, 9c, 'Leistungskampf', p. 19.

²⁵⁷ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 1048, construction plan of IG Auschwitz, 3.8. 1944.

The health care of the foreign workers continued. In the Auschwitz infirmary, the different nationalities were kept in separate rooms. Poles and Eastern workers in particular rarely came to the town for treatment. As a rule, the IG company doctor Peschel admitted them to the "extended infirmary" ²⁵⁸. This formed an "intermediate stage between outpatient clinic and hospital", where the majority of seriously ill foreign workers were treated. In his work, Peschel adopted the IG view that "too much time was wasted by the panel doctors examining patients too closely", which is why "strict standards" should be applied to examinations.

The heterogeneous composition of the workforce did not correspond to the ideal ideas of the IG planners, but this was accepted for the duration of the war. The hierarchical structure of the workforce was not static, but adapted to the respective military situation. The allocation of Croatian men and Russian women in August 1 942, for example, was, in the opinion of the construction management, "not suitable for improving the average quality of our workforce". ²⁵⁹ to raise the level of the workforce or significantly increase work performance". Only Four months later, however, site manager Faust urged the German employees to show "a great deal of understanding" towards the Ukrainian women workers, "as the men and brothers of these women are also fighting alongside our soldiers in large numbers" ²⁶⁰. However, a change was also possible in the opposite direction. While the temporary workers recruited in Italy initially enjoyed preferential treatment as members of a friendly nation, the situation changed fundamentally after Italy left the ranks of the "Axis powers". After September 1 943, Italian workers and prisoners of war were treated significantly worse than their Western European counterparts. However, the most extreme living and working conditions were undoubtedly experienced by prisoner laborers.

²⁵⁸ Here and in the following: Nümbg. doc. NI-14575, Peschel statement, February 28, 1948, p. 1 ff.

²⁵⁹ Nümbg. doc. NI-14553. 62nd/62nd weekly report, 9.8. 1 942.

²⁶⁰ Nümbg. doc. NI-15102, 82nd/83rd weekly report, 27. 1 2.1942.

"Setting up a concentration camp is a terrible thing. It is torture for the inmates. There was always a certain reluctance to speak."

Otto Ambros¹

III. Hierarchy and selection: the prisoner camp Monowitz

1. The construction of the warehouse

From the summer of 1942 onwards, the management of IG Auschwitz intensified its efforts to build a camp to house the prisoners it employed in the immediate vicinity of the factory premises. From a purely economic perspective, everything spoke in favor of such a project, but plant manager Walther Dürrfeld had to take a number of other considerations into account at the Auschwitz site. Contrary to his original expectations, inmate laborers could not simply be deployed like other workers. Cooperation with the management of the Auschwitz concentration camp turned out to be more difficult than he had assumed in the euphoria of the founding phase.

Reasons for building

The main problem lay in the inadequate labor productivity of the prisoners deployed on the IG construction site since April 1941; it was far below the level achieved by free workers and thus fell far short of the factory management's expectations. In the agreements with the SS, they had agreed to a flat-rate valuation of a prisoner worker at 75 percent of the work output of a German worker. However, for various reasons, this figure was not even close to being achieved over the following years. According to the IG managers, this was mainly due to the long journey to the camp and the arduous transportation of the prisoners from KL Auschwitz to their work detachment, which often took several hours.

Just a few months after the start of the prisoner deployment, the management therefore began to consider housing the prisoners on the construction site itself². This seemed all the more necessary as an expansion of the prisoner deployment to 4,000 to 5,000 men was planned for 1942. In order to meet the tight deadlines, the construction management had also planned to introduce a shift system for the particularly urgent projects, in which the prisoners were also to be involved. However, such continuous work could only succeed smoothly if there were no time-consuming and exhausting distances to be covered between the accommodation and work sites. Höß was obviously open to this argument, so that at the end of October 1941

¹Nuremberg doc. NI-9542, Ambros statement, 29.4. 1947, p. 19.

² Nuremberg doc. NI-4033, Krauch statement, February 13, 1947, p. 13. Krauch dates the first proposal to establish an IG-owned prisoner camp in the IG executive committee to the end of 1941.

the construction of two barracks "directly in front of the prefabricated concrete halls". could be taken. These wooden shelters, which were also used by the Reich Labor Service, were intended for around 200 prisoners who were to work in two shifts in the production of prefabricated concrete parts³.

However, Dürrfeld's plan to house all the prisoners working on the IG construction site directly on the factory premises in 1942 failed. Höß rejected this. He was forced to set up a completely new organization for this branch, for which he lacked the necessary personnel and resources"⁴. Although the management of IG Farben supported the expansion of the Auschwitz concentration camp by transferring material quotas, the concentration camp had reached the limits of its capacity at this time. In the late summer of 1941, Höß had received the "order [...] to build a new concentration camp on the site.

of the concentration camp to house 125,000 Russian prisoners of war within a very short time"⁵. This was based on ideas⁶ that Himmler had developed in the spring of 1941 in view of the emerging cooperation with the IG. The huge expansion of the camp complex in Auschwitz was obviously intended to provide the basis for the SS's increased involvement in the armaments industry. Behind such far-reaching

The economic interests of IG Auschwitz had to take a back seat to these plans. Even a further request for support to Krauch, in which he was informed about the "difficulties in deploying prisoners"⁷, among other things, could not change this.

Under these circumstances, the allocation of further prisoner quotas was out of the question. Over the next few months, the factory management therefore pondered ways of increasing the performance of the existing prisoners. Possibly inspired by the example of the SS, they initially believed that they could achieve an improvement through stricter disciplinary measures. In the last construction meeting of 1941, it was therefore agreed that the work performance on the construction site should only be

to be "promoted" if the supervisory staff were increased. At the same time, the expansion of factory security was decided⁸. However, the result of tougher driving and rigorous supervision was, as soon became apparent, only an even faster exhaustion of the prisoners without any significant increase in productivity. However, the construction management could not (yet) afford such ruthless treatment of the camp inmates at this time, as labor was scarce. Harassing behavior on the part of the supervisory staff and excessive maltreatment therefore also seemed counterproductive to the management. An IG-owned camp, on the other hand, would not make the prisoners' lot any easier, but it would increase their strength.

³ APMO, D-Au III, Tygodniowe Sprawozdania IG Farben, t. 2, 22nd weekly report, 27. 10. 1941.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ He had formulated these even before his first visit to Auschwitz. The SS New Construction Office of KL Auschwitz had already drawn up a plan of the area of interest of KL Auschwitz in February 1941, which was dated March 1, 1941. BAB, R 2/B 61 82 Cf. Steinbacher, "Musterstadt" Auschwitz, Chapter IV.2.

⁷ Nümbg. doc. NI-1 11 27, 12th construction meeting, 7. 10. 1941 in Leuna, p. 4.

⁸ BAB, R 81 28/A 1984, p. 5, 14th construction meeting, 16.12.1941.

The exhaustion caused by the transportation to and fro could be used more consistently for the purposes of the company. The "useless" exhaustion caused by the transportation to and fro would thus benefit the development of IG Auschwitz in the interests of the managers. However, the establishment of a prisoner camp on the factory premises was initially out of the question.

The major expansion measures in the Birkenau POW camp had an even greater impact on the progress of the Buna construction project in the following months. On the one hand, the delivery of the products promised by Höß from the workshops of the concentration camp or the German equipment factories was delayed, as the prisoners deployed there were now primarily carrying out orders from the SS new construction management. However, the cold weather and the long and arduous march under SS guard also hindered the employment of inmates on the construction site. Their numbers steadily decreased over the course of the winter, in the In March 1942, it was "only" 1,00 men. Construction manager Faust believed that the only way to increase the number again was through better transportation⁹.

The transportation of the prisoners from KL Auschwitz to the construction site in Monowitz was indeed still the limiting factor of the work assignment. The kilometer-long march over muddy paths took a lot of strength and tied up too many guards. However, the Reichsbahn had not proved to be a reliable means of transportation either, as the Wehrmacht trains to the Eastern Front were the main route between Auschwitz and Krakow. Delays lasting hours were therefore the order of the day. What's more, in the winter months, the prisoners' long wait in the open freight wagons was just as detrimental to their performance.

In March 1942, camp commander Höß was suddenly open to the idea of increasing labor efficiency - just four days after Himmler had integrated the inspection of the concentration camps into the Economic Administration Main Office (WVHA). While Höß had previously had no direct interest in the most economical use of prisoners at the IG, the instructions from the WVHA were now apparently beginning to have an effect. Suddenly, the problems of the exhausting march without means of transportation seemed clear to him: In a meeting with senior IG employees, the commander

"among other things, that under no circumstances should the prisoners be allowed to The prisoners were not supposed to be able to walk from the camp to the construction site, as a large percentage of them were physically unable to do so."¹⁰ How the prisoners were supposed to be able to do productive work on the construction site when they were already too weak to walk, no one apparently asked themselves.

To solve the transportation problem, the commandant of Auschwitz wanted to fall back on an old project that had already been discussed in the spring of 1941: a narrow-gauge railroad was to transport the prisoners over the Sola to IG Auschwitz and back. However, the IG representatives were skeptical about Höß' proposal. Although they agreed to "discuss the question of a narrow-gauge railroad from K.L.

⁹ Nümbg. doc. NI- 11132, 16th construction meeting, 6.3.1942, p. 4.

¹⁰ APMO, D-Au III, Tygodniowe Sprawozdania IG Farben, t. 2, p. 121 ff., meeting report, March 20, 1942, on a meeting of IG representatives (Faust, Roßbach) with the management of the KL.

to keep an eye on the factory construction site", but they were now more familiar with the problems associated with such a project than the KL commander, who was only planning on a huge scale: In view of the already pressing shortage of materials, the procurement of the necessary equipment was illusory and could hardly be justified to the supervisory authorities, as it was possible to transport the workers by the Reichsbahn after all. In addition, Chief Engineer Faust must also have doubted the economic sense of such an effort, which would have been much better invested in the construction of a warehouse directly on the factory premises.

Decision in favor of a company-owned prisoner camp

Despite the increasing Wehrmacht traffic to the eastern front and the resulting obstructions, the number of prisoners deployed at IG Auschwitz increased again in the spring of 1942: at the beginning of April there were around 750¹¹, a month later over 1,000 men¹². However, the upward trend did not last long. In May, the first cases of typhus occurred in the Auschwitz main camp, which led to increased security measures. This probably gave the management of IG Farben new arguments to once again demand the construction of a camp right next to the factory premises. At the end of June 1942, Faust was finally able to announce the success of his efforts to his superiors in the weekly report: The foundations for seven barracks in so-called Camp IV had been laid and two buildings had already been erected. Following the decision to turn Camp IV, originally intended for civilian workers, into a concentration camp, work had already begun on the construction of the new camp.

Construction of the security facilities began in accordance with the specifications of the SS construction management¹³. The costs for the construction of the camp, amounting to around five million RM, were borne by the IG. The sum was made available for the new Auschwitz construction project in the usual way: Within the financial framework agreed at the start of construction, the local construction management submitted its application directly to the Technical Committee. This committee, which was directly responsible to the Executive Board, then de facto decided on the allocation of funds. In contrast to many other loans that were approved unseen, the members of the Technical Committee considered this proposal to be unusual enough to discuss it.

ted. The board that subsequently met finally approved the loan on the recommendation of the committee in the belief, as Ambras testified after the war, that it would do the prisoners some good¹⁴.

This finally fulfilled a long-held demand of the IG to be able to align the use of prisoners more closely with their economic needs. Nevertheless, it was not assumed that all problems would now be solved in one fell swoop.

¹¹ Nuremberg doc. NI-1 1 133, 17th construction meeting, 8.4. 1942.

¹² BAB, R 81 28/A 1984, internal IG correspondence, 5.5. 1942, which mentions 1 600 prisoners at the IG. The report on the 7th meeting of the "K" Commission, Nuremberg Doc. NI- 1421 2, 6.5.1 942, however, mentions a figure of only 1 000.

¹³ Nümbg. doc. NI- 14524, 57th weekly report, 28.6. 1942.

¹⁴ Nuremberg doc. NI-9542, testimony Ambros, 29.4. 1947, p. 16 f.

would have been solved. At the next construction meeting, the responsible IG managers were rather skeptical, but took the decision as an opportunity to initiate a whole series of measures to increase efficiency: "The difficulties that continue to arise in the use of prisoners are to be resolved by accommodating 4,500 men in Camp IV on the factory premises. The success of these measures remains to be seen. In any case, it will be possible to deploy the prisoners in large groups and on shifts. The prefabricated concrete workshops were only to be occupied by prisoners, and the Germans and Italians currently working there were to be moved to the construction site. The catering

The K.L. was responsible for managing the prisoners in Camp IV. The specific and overall performance of the prisoners was to be increased through a kind of piecework system."¹⁵

If the prisoners were ever to be used effectively, the establishment of a separate camp was the only logical decision in view of the economic interests of IG Auschwitz. This quickly became apparent both from the general development of concentration camps in the Reich and from the specific situation at the Auschwitz main camp. Once the decision to build the prisoner camp had been made, however, it was months before the first inmates marched into the "Buna camp". Initially, the construction management had to contend with the usual difficulties caused by interference from the SS, which, despite all the rhetoric, did not give the IG's economic interests the highest priority.

From July 1942, the concentration camps were also increasingly involved in the campaign to make the Reich "free of Jews". This initially meant a large-scale relocation operation: Jewish prisoners were transported from the camps in the old Reich to the camps in the east or in the newly incorporated parts of the Reich. In order to compensate for the labor shortages in the Reich, mainly Polish concentration camp inmates were brought into the Reich from the eastern camps. In Auschwitz, this led to major changes within the prisoner structure and to a high turnover in the work detachments. As a result, "different workers"¹⁶ were deployed almost daily on individual construction site sections. As there were now often only untrained prisoners available, this meant considerable disadvantages for the progress of work on the construction site. Particularly disadvantageous

This was particularly noticeable in work that required a certain amount of experience, such as the production of prefabricated concrete parts¹⁷.

After just three weeks, when the situation had stabilized somewhat and the inmates were making progress with their induction, the Buna work detachments came to an end for the time being: An epidemic had developed in the Auschwitz main camp from the individual cases of typhus in the spring. In order to prevent the disease from spreading to the civilian population and the staff of the IG, the commandant's office of the concentration camp issued a "camp closure" on July 20, 1942¹⁸. The consequence was that for the foreseeable future

¹⁵ Nümbg. doc. NI-11 137, 19th construction meeting, 13.7.1942, p. 7.

¹⁶ Nümbg. doc. NI-14512, 58th/59th weekly report, July 12, 1942, here discussion with SS-Obersturmführer Schwarz on July 9, 1942.

¹⁷ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 5085, 60th/61st weekly report, July 26, 1942.

¹⁸ Ibid.

time, no more prisoners would march to the Buna construction site. The construction management was powerless against the painful loss of a considerable number of its workers. However, they did have some hope that prisoners would soon be re-employed when the commandant's office held out the prospect of "new recruits and new workers".

to our camp as soon as it was ready to receive prisoners"¹⁹. The IG managers therefore made great efforts to complete the construction of the barracks quickly, but had to make do without prisoners for the following weeks.

At the beginning of September 1942, "Camp IV", as it continued to be called within the IG, was complete except for the double fencing with barbed wire and electrically charged wire demanded by the SS²⁰. The construction management expected the delivery

of the fence material in the following days, so that an opening of the camp at the end of September seemed realistic²¹. On September 23, 1942, the head of the WVHA, SS-Obergruppenführer Pohl, came to Auschwitz to inquire about the expansion of the camp.

progress of the concentration camp as well as the IG's production facilities²². IG board member Ambros took the opportunity to point out the problems of using prisoners on the company construction site. Pohl then told him

support in various areas, as he recognized the "crucial" importance of the plant. Among other things, he agreed to provide prisoners as soon as the camp was completed²³.

However, delivery problems with the safety equipment and new, stricter requirements imposed by the SS led to a further delay. Two representatives of the KL demanded

In a debriefing after Pohl's visit, the IG now had to set up an additional "prison, various holding cells, a death chamber for 30-40 dead people, a dissection room, etc."²⁴ in the future new camp before prisoners could be housed there. Such installations would have inevitably delayed the commissioning of Camp IV. Chief Engineer Faust, possibly encouraged by Pohl's still fresh, supportive words, was angry at this uncooperative attitude on the part of the concentration camp and declared himself unwilling to accept such short notice.

to accept new conditions, which "they would have had the opportunity to register three months ago"²⁵. IG and KL finally agreed to postpone the completion of these buildings so as not to further delay the deployment of prisoners.

¹⁹ Nümbg. doc. NI- 15084, 64th/65th weekly report, 23.8. 1 942.

²⁰ Nümbg. doc. NI- 111 38, 20th construction meeting, 8.9. 1 942, p. 6.

²¹ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 4555, 66th/67th weekly report, 6.9. 1 942.

²² StA Frankfurt a.M., criminal case 4 Ks 2/63, folder 26, p. 92 ff.

²³ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 4489, 70./7 1. weekly report, 4. 10. 1 942.

²⁴ Nümbg. doc. NI- 145 14, 70./7 1. weekly report, 4. 10.1 942, here discussion of 2. 1 0.1 942.

²⁵ Ibid.

"Monowitz was large-scale,
heated and hygienic."

Otto Ambros²⁶

Opening and expansion of the prisoner camp

Nevertheless, it took almost another month before Camp IV was finally opened on October 28, 1942 and was initially occupied by 600 prisoners, the majority of whom came from KL Buchenwald and Holland. Among them were around 60 to 100 prisoner functionaries, the majority from Auschwitz, who the SS wanted to take over the internal organization of the camp²⁷. When these first prisoners arrived at the new subcamp, there were six to eight wooden barracks, which only offered each prisoner their own bed at the very beginning. After the arrival of further transports with up to 1,500 prisoners a day, the new camp was also quickly overcrowded. On average, two or three inmates soon had to share a bed, and at certain times up to four²⁸. The RAD barracks, made of prefabricated wooden parts, were around 26 meters long and eight meters wide²⁹ and connected to the Buna factory's district heating system. Each barrack, originally intended to accommodate around 55 civilian workers³⁰, was initially occupied by around 190 prisoners; later, an average of around 250 prisoners were housed there³¹.

The "Buna camp"³² was located on the site of the former village of Monowitz, which had been "completely destroyed" during the construction of the camp³³, i.e. around six kilometers east of the town of Auschwitz. It formed a rectangle that extended about 500 meters from east to west and about 270 meters from north to south³⁴. From the outside, the camp was strictly secured, as can be seen from the detailed description of a former IG employee³⁵: According to this, a three-part fence surrounded the entire facility. The outer barrier was a two-meter-high wire mesh fence reinforced with barbed wire. Two meters further inside was a fence under high voltage, erected by the "electrical" department of the IG,

²⁶ Nuremberg doc. NI-9542, Ambros statement, 29.4. 1947, p. 15.

²⁷ Frankfurt am Main District Court, judgment in the criminal case 4 Ks 1/67, June 14, 1968, p. 19.

²⁸ Nuremberg Doc. NI-4828, Stern testimony, 1.3.1947, p. 1, who had come to Monowitz as the 13th prisoner.

²⁹ Frankfurt am Main District Court, judgment in criminal case 4 Ks 1/67, 14.6. 1968, p. 17.

³⁰ This can be seen from the IG-Bauleitung's credit application: for the expansion of the barrack capacity by 5,000 beds, it applied for 90 wooden accommodation units of the above-mentioned size, to which supply facilities were added. Nuremberg doc. NI-11 944, credit claim A 149/42, 28.1. 1942.

³¹ StA Frankfurt a.M., judgment in criminal case 4 Ks 1/67, 14.6. 1968, p. 19.

³² "Camp Buna" was the first official name of the IG prisoner camp. Based on plans drawn up by the IG-Baulei. However, the original designation "Camp IV" was also used until the end of 1944. In camp jargon and among IG employees, however, the term "Monowitz concentration camp" was used from the very beginning, although it was not officially given this name until the end of 1944. From November 1943, the camp was called KL Auschwitz III, Buna labor camp".

³³ APMO, Osw/Posener/ 14, p. 1, report by prisoner Curt Posener.

³⁴ StA Frankfurt a.M., judgment in the criminal case 4 Ks 1/67, 14.6. 1968, p. 17. Cf. also the camp plan in the appendix.

³⁵ Nuremberg doc. NI-1 0930, Doemming statement, 28.8. 1947, p. 3 f.

which was illuminated at night. The actual border to the camp area consisted of simple wire mesh, which served as a "warning fence". A total of ten to twelve towers manned by SS guards³⁶ were used to monitor the camp inmates.

Lengthwise, the main camp road running slightly south of the center divided the camp into two sections; the "central fence" ran from north to south, separating the prisoner camp from the SS quarters in the initial phase. In the winter of 1942/43, the prisoners first built the north-eastern quadrant of the camp with a total of twenty barracks. Fourteen of these were used as living quarters, six (eight in the final stage) formed the prisoner infirmary (HKB)³⁷.

The occupancy of the first blocks marked the end of a phase lasting several months in which the IG

which had to make do without inmate labor. The first transport already intended for work in the Buna works had arrived in Auschwitz on the evening of October 19, 1942³⁸; the 404 inmates from Buchenwald were first sent to the main camp, 76 of whom were gassed in Birkenau in the following days³⁹. Some of the prisoner functionaries later deployed in Monowitz were recruited from the group of political prisoners on the Buchenwald transport. The other half of the initial group arrived on October 27, 1942 from the Dutch camp Westerbork. Of the 841 Jews deported, the SS gassed around half, with only 224 men finally reaching the "Buna camp"⁴⁰. The second larger group of prisoners, around 400 men, who had been transferred from Sachsenhausen on October 25, were transferred by the commandant's office to the new camp four days later⁴¹. On the two days following the opening, transports from Dachau and Ravensbrück as well as a collective transport arrived; after the selection, "the approximately 800 stronger prisoners who were considered fit for work" were marched to Monowitz⁴².

The occupancy rate thus quickly grew to a level that corresponded to the number of prisoners in the spring of 1942. However, only some of the newly admitted prisoners met the stricter standards that the SS and IG had apparently set for the new camp. In any case, the "Illa Department" of the SS camp administration, which was responsible for labor deployment, carried out a new selection in which the SS doctors certified that the prisoners who had arrived from Dachau in particular were in "very poor physical condition". No one was fit for "work in the Buna works".

³⁶ According to APMO, Osw/Posener/14, p. 3, there were 15 towers.

³⁷ StA Frankfurt a.M., judgment in the criminal case 4 Ks 1/67, June 14, 1968, p. 18 ff.

³⁸ Cf. Czech, Kalendarium, p. 322

³⁹ Nümbg. doc. NI-7967, statement Schulhof, 2 I.6. 1947, who worked as a clerk in the labor department in Monowitz, S. I.

⁴⁰ Cf. Czech, Kalendarium, p. 327.

⁴¹ StA Frankfurt a.M., judgment in the criminal case 4 Ks 1/67, 14.6.1968, p. 20.

⁴² Cf. Czech, Kalendarium, p. 328 f.

suitable by these, as reported immediately to the Main Economic Administration Office⁴³.

It remains unclear why all the transports mentioned were apparently admitted via the main camp, which was still closed due to typhus. The direct admission to the Buna camp, which had already been planned in August, was only introduced at the beginning of 1943, and then only for a short time⁴⁴. It can be assumed that the commandant's office in Auschwitz placed the transports intended for the Buna plant in special blocks separate from the rest of the camp in order to prevent infection.

In the Buna camp, the SS initially assigned prisoners to the blocks numbered 6, 8, 10, 12 and 14 along the northern camp fence. Block 4 was used to house the so-called commandos, who carried out tasks within the camp, i.e. did not work in the Buna factories. Senior prisoner functionaries also had their private rooms there. Block 1 was set up as an effects chamber and magazine. Due to the continued allocation of new transports from the Theresienstadt and Gross-Rosen concentration camps, from Holland and from Grodno in Belarus, the north-eastern section was already fully occupied with around 3,800 prisoners at the turn of 1942/43, which is why the construction of further blocks in the south-eastern quadrant was begun⁴⁵. Only the eastern half of this section was built on, while the other half up to the temporary central fence was used as a prison camp.

after completion of the new construction phase as a roll call area. Until then, roll calls took place on the camp road between rows 1 to 3 and rows 4 to 6⁴⁶. Even the main camp street had only been completed in its shell when it was opened; the road construction work lasted until spring 1943⁴⁷.

The double burden for the majority of prisoners, who had to work at least nine hours on the factory construction site and then another three to four hours⁴⁸ on the construction of the camp, took its toll: "In the first few months, each block lost 6-10 people a day," as one former prisoner reported⁴⁹. In the words of Herbert Rosenberg, who had been deported from Berlin, Monowitz was a "Construction camp"⁵⁰. The prisoners had to fetch the materials for its completion from the abandoned farmhouses along the way. This additional burden for the weak bodies of the Buna prisoners was also indelibly etched in Tibor Wohl's memory: "Those who did not carry a body had to be

⁴³ "Hardly a third of the transferred prisoners could be used for other work, and even then only after a fourteen-day recovery period," the purple department reported on 30. 10. 1941 to Office D II of the WVHA. In contrast, "the 186 prisoners transferred from Ravensbrück concentration camp were in a better condition", the report continued; cf., S. 330.

⁴⁴ StA Frankfurt a.M., judgment in the criminal case 4 Ks 1 /67, June 14, 1968, p. 20.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Frankfurt am Main District Court, judgment in the criminal case 4 Ks 1 /67, June 14, 1968, p. 19.

⁴⁸ Nuremberg doc. NI-1 1081, Zlotolow testimony, 2.9. 1947, p. 3.

⁴⁹ Nuremberg doc. NI-4828, Stern testimony, 1.3.1947, p. 2.

⁵⁰ Nuremberg Doc. NI-11 654, Rosenberg testimony, p. 1.

carry three bricks into the camp. We searched feverishly for three whole bricks, because otherwise we had to take twice the number of half bricks. Exhausted from the day's work, we could barely hold the bricks." ⁵¹

The effects of this can also be seen in the number of prisoners in the Monowitz camp: While the rapid succession of transports had led to a rapid increase in the number of prisoners to almost 4,000 by the end of 1942, the double burden caused mass deaths among the already weakened prisoners. Over the next two months, around half of the camp inmates lost their lives on the IG construction site or in the camp, and many more lay in the infirmary⁵². It was not until mid-March 1943 that the number of prisoners to be housed rose again significantly from under 2,000, which is why the temporary central fence was removed in the second half of 1943 and the western part of the camp was also expanded⁵³. In the course of these construction measures, the barracks initially occupied by the SS guards were also vacated. The SS moved into newly built accommodation directly outside the actual camp grounds on its western boundary⁵⁴.

When the number of prisoners in the camp rose above the previous target of 5,000 in the summer of 1943, the expansion of the barracks could no longer keep pace. Operations manager Dürrfeld then had two tents erected on the camp grounds. Originally, they were supposed to accommodate a total of 700 prisoners⁵⁵, but soon there were over 1,000⁵⁶. It is no longer clear how long these tents were used. Although they were not heated, they were in any case in use until Christmas 1943⁵⁷, probably even until October 1 1944⁵⁸. Inside the former beer tents, the usual three-storey beds stood on a floor covered only with gravel. They were usually occupied by two to three men each. There were no sanitary facilities in the tents. Like their comrades in the blocks of flats, the "tent prisoners" had to go to the "abort barracks" erected some distance away⁵⁹. By the end of the year, the number of prisoners in the camp had risen to around 7,000 as a result of the construction of this temporary accommodation. By May 1 1944, it had risen only marginally. The ongoing influx remained

⁵¹ Cf. Wohl, Labor, p. 42.

⁵² See table 4 in the appendix.

⁵³ StA Frankfurt a.M., judgment in the criminal case 4 Ks 1/67, June 14, 1968, p. 21.

⁵⁴ **APMO**, Osw/Posener/14, p. 4.

⁵⁵ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 0930, Doemming statement, 28.8.1 1947, p. 4.

⁵⁶ Nümbg. doc. NI-1 1046, statement by Dürrfeld in cross-examination with former inmate Ludwig Hess, S. 7.

⁵⁷ Nümbg. doc. NI-98 1 9, statement by IG chief engineer Max Faust, 7.8. 1 1947, p. 4.

⁵⁸ Nümbg. doc. NI-11046, statement by Dürrfeld in cross-examination with former inmate Ludwig Hess, 24.2. 1947, p. 7. The aerial photographs taken by American reconnaissance planes also suggest that the tents were still standing until the summer/autumn of 1944. The photos from May 31, 1 1944 clearly show two large tents at the edge of the roll call area, which can no longer be seen in the photos from January 14, 1 1945; see IfZ, Fa 716, photos 24, 25.

⁵⁹ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 2204, Wagenaar statement, 27. 10.1 1947, p. 2.

with the numerous departures due to death, illness and selection.

However, the situation changed abruptly with the start of the "final solution" in Hungary. Around 100,000 Hungarian Jews had already been transported to Birkenau in the second half of May 1944 and were mostly gassed immediately⁶⁰. The rest were sent to the camp as so-called depot prisoners, but were not admitted to the registry⁶¹. The "Buna camp" also received new workers from this reservoir. As a result, the number of prisoners in the camp grew by leaps and bounds to a peak of over 11,000 by the end of July 1944. In the following years, In the last six months of the camp's existence, the camp administration attempted to keep the number of prisoners constant at just over 10,000^{men62} by compensating for the ongoing loss of life with transfers from Birkenau.

The SS accommodated most of the new arrivals in the ten barracks that had been completed shortly before⁶³, which marked the end of the expansion of the Auschwitz III camp⁶⁴. It now comprised about 60 barracks. However, a maximum of 50 were available for the accommodation of "simple" prisoners, in each of which at least 200 were housed with an average occupancy of 10,000 prisoners. The rest were used as administrative buildings, for example, as

Block 37, where the commandant's office and labor service were housed. Other blocks were used as storage rooms⁶⁵ or reserved for privileged prisoners. Block 7, for example, was reserved for "celebrities" and was not allowed to be entered by "ordinary" prisoners. The other Reichsdeutsche lived in Block 47 and the Kapos in Block 49. Their privileged position is also evident from the fact that their canteen took up half of Block 12, whereas "ordinary" prisoners had to eat their meagre rations on their beds, which they shared with one or two comrades. Block 29 housed a brothel where, from mid-1944, Polish women had to make themselves available to the Reich German prisoners in particular⁶⁶.

There were also various workshops in the camp that produced goods for the camp's own use: carpentry, glazing, metalworking and others were housed in the barracks, which also contained the washrooms. The camp's own prison, the so-called camp bunker or detention center, was also integrated into part of a washing barrack. The camp also had a horse stable, a gardener's workshop and a car mechanic's workshop. The prisoners' kitchen, to which the SS kitchen was also attached, was located in the western part of the camp. Next to this building were the potato peeling kitchen, the SS canteen and the SS dining room.

⁶⁰ Cf. Vrba, Warning, p. 14.

⁶¹ Cf. Czech, Kalendarium, p. 776.

⁶² See table 4 in the appendix.

⁶³ Cf. Levi, Mensch, p. 31.

⁶⁴ Nümbg. doc. NI- 10928, Staischak statement, Sept. 3, 1947, p. 2; cf. also the camp plan in the appendix.

⁶⁵ Nümbg. doc. NI- 10930, Doemming statement, August 28, 1947, p. 5; also APMO, Osw/Posener/14, p. 3: Prisoners' clothing room, prisoners' cobbler's shop, storage for barracks furnishings, prisoners' writing room, labor service.

⁶⁶ APMO, Osw/Posener/14, p. 3.

The "Buna camp" set up on the initiative of IG Farben was thus modeled on other National Socialist concentration camps. Although it was intended exclusively to house the prisoners deployed on the factory construction site, it was not a mere labor camp, as was often claimed after the war. The multiple fencing, some of which was electrified, the numerous guard towers and the large SS garrison leave no doubt that the aim of the camp was to keep the prisoners under as much control as possible. The establishment of the various workshops also meant that it was largely self-contained, so that the SS could reduce contact with the surroundings to a minimum. Just over a year and a half after the start of construction in Auschwitz, the IG thus had its own concentration camp.

"Our entire work in Auschwitz was a constant struggle for the most social treatment possible, not only for the German and foreign workers, but also for the inmates. I was aware that the SS regarded the inmates as a different category of people, I always had this impression, so I worked all the harder to create acceptable conditions for them, the inmates. If the conditions were stronger than we were, then that is not the result of an antisocial attitude." Walther Dürrfeld

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2. The people in the camp

Although the Monowitz camp had been built on the initiative and with the money of a private company, the SS continued to claim sole authority there. However, due to the unusual structure and objectives of the IG camp, it was not the only power factor there. The "camp reality" resulted from the confrontation, cooperation and collaboration of the three groups that made up the camp: the SS as the leading power, the so-called functional prisoners, who were given certain privileges, and the "masses" of prisoners. Although not represented in the camp itself, the IG, with its economic demands, also had a formative influence on "camp life". The following chapter will focus on the relationships between these four groups of actors. The aim is to use the fragmentary records of events in Monowitz to provide as comprehensive a picture as possible of what life was like for the prisoners there: from their arrival on the ramp in Auschwitz to their work in the various prisoner detachments and the typical final stage of a prisoner's existence as a "Muselmann", who died in the infirmary or after selection in the gas chambers of Birkenau. Which stages a prisoner passed through during his stay in Monowitz, whether he fell victim to the exhausting work and inhumane living conditions or whether he died in the gas chambers of Birkenau.

⁶⁷ Nuremberg Doc. NI- 11 046, Dürrfeld testimony, February 24, 1947, p. 49.

Whether an inmate survived in a privileged position depended primarily on his national and "racial" descent. We must therefore begin by examining the origins and scope for action of the camp's inmates and staff.

The "mass" of prisoners

For the ordinary prisoners, there were two routes to the "Buna camp": via the main Auschwitz camp or directly to Monowitz. Almost without exception, they arrived in freight cars that the Reich Security Main Office had assembled into long deportation transports in the European countries under German occupation. On average, the SS deported around 2,000 people from their homeland in one such train, usually crammed together like cattle without sufficient food. The up to 100 men, women and children per wagon had to relieve themselves in the tin buckets they carried with them; the oppressive cramped conditions and lack of hygiene claimed many lives during the journey. When the doors, which were firmly locked from the outside, finally opened after days of traveling in an unknown direction, loud SS commandos and the beatings of men in striped suits drove the deportees out of the wagons in no time at all. It took a while for the people, who were often blinded and dazed at first, to find out from the bystanders where they were: on the Auschwitz ramp, as the provisional platform near the main camp was trivialized in camp jargon⁶⁸.

Even before the new arrivals had a chance to get their bearings in their new surroundings, the SS had already begun the arrival selection process. Their procedure depended on the actual destination of the train: if a transport was destined directly for work at the IG construction site, only women, children, old people and other people not fit for work left the wagons at the main camp with all their hand luggage. Most of the luggage was then sent to Monowitz with the men who, at first glance, were fit for work. This is presumably the reason why the main administration of KL Auschwitz tried to receive the vast majority of the transports at the main camp in the first instance: this was the only way it could sufficiently satisfy its interest in the belongings of the deportees. So if the transport was to go to Monowitz via the Auschwitz main camp, the SS doctors subjected the deportees to a somewhat more detailed yet superficial examination. The decisive criterion in their eyes was the new arrivals' ability to work. Adolescents and children therefore had very poor prospects, as the SS doctors considered their strength to be insufficient in view of the hard work in the IG factory or another labor camp. Women who were deemed fit for work were sent to the main camp, Birkenau or other subcamps. Apart from the Polish women in the brothel, no women lived in the Buna camp itself.

⁶⁸ The new large ramp within the Birkenau camp boundaries was only completed in the spring of 1944, shortly before the arrival of the first deportation transports from Hungary.

However, the SS immediately sent the majority of an arriving transport "to the gas" as unfit for work; the rate varied, but was often 70 to 80 percent. The otherwise meticulous SS administration did not even bother to register these people. Only a few hours later, they were already murdered - no record documented their death.

Those who had survived this first selection now underwent the admission procedure: First, they were stripped of all their clothing, their shoes and all personal belongings. This served just as much to requisition valuables as it did to humiliate the deportees⁶⁹: the SS made it clear to them from the outset that they no longer had any rights here, that their lives were of no value. The guards then forced the new prisoners into large washrooms in the disinfection block, where they could shower under ice-cold water. A specially assigned prisoner squad then cut their hair, shaved their skulls, armpits and pubic area and coated these areas with petroleum. After the camp newcomers had survived this arrival ritual, which often lasted for hours, the SS drove them naked to the clothing issue point. There they received their prisoner suits: a jacket and a pair of trousers made of blue and white striped cotton drill, the texture of which resembled coarse sackcloth⁷⁰. They were also given a shirt, a pair of trousers and a pair of shoes: they were made of wooden soles with sewn-on linen trimmings.

The transformation of the Indians, who had been deported from their homeland a few days earlier, into concentration camp prisoners was thus complete and they were taken to the quarantine blocks of the main camp⁷¹. There, "older" prisoners, who were counted in the camp after just a few months, registered the new arrivals and assigned them their prisoner number. For all official procedures in the camp, this number was the only decisive identification feature; the former name no longer played a role.

From this moment on, the individual left his previous life behind and entered the anonymity of the camp world. Finding their way there must have been overwhelming for most of the newly arrived prisoners. After the first few hours in the camp, they were still in a state of shock: most of them had recently lost their relatives without any opportunity to say goodbye. After what they learned from the other prisoners, they had no illusions about their fate. The SS and their assistants had taken all their personal belongings with such speed and rigor that no resistance could form. Within a very short time, all links to their former identity had been severed. The many emaciated, bedraggled figures who dragged themselves with difficulty along the camp streets made it immediately clear to the new arrivals what fate awaited them.

⁶⁹ Cf. Wohl, *Labor*, p. 21.

⁷⁰ Nümbg. doc. NL- 11 694, Davison statement, 19.7. 1 947, p. 1.

⁷¹ Cf. Wohl, *Arbeit*, p. 20 f.

threatened. Only those who managed to adapt quickly to the new, terrifying camp world had a chance of surviving.

After a maximum of eight days in the main camp, the new prisoners were then marched to Monowitz or transported there by truck. On arrival, they passed through the gate with the inscription "Arbeit macht frei" ("Work makes you free"). As in all the other concentration camps, this was merely an expression of the SS's cynicism, but this motto characterized the main purpose of the camp more than anywhere else: work. Only their ability to work had at least temporarily saved the prisoners from being gassed; it therefore became the central object of their camp existence. After another delousing and registration, the work assignment usually began the following day with the march to the IG Farben construction site.

Those who arrived directly in Monowitz underwent a very similar procedure. After the new prisoners had been stripped of their belongings, they underwent the obligatory disinfection procedures here too. The SS then took them to a quarantine block, where prisoner clerks again took over the registration for the "Arbeitseinsatz" and the file of the Political Department. At the end of the quarantine periods of varying lengths, during which they worked in cordoned-off areas, the new prisoners were assigned to the various work detachments on the construction site⁷².

Individual arrivals to Monowitz were very rare. In accordance with the large demand for workers, the WVHA generally assigned all those capable of working from a large transport to the construction site. However, only a fraction of the approximately 2,000 people brought to East Upper Silesia by the Reichsbahn reached the IG camp after the first selection. With these strict selection criteria, the SS ensured that the construction management of the chemical company only received the healthy and strong prisoners they wanted.

At the time and after the opening of the "Buna camp", the transports coming to Auschwitz consisted almost exclusively of Jews who had been deported from various European countries⁷³. In the course of 1943, these came mainly from the ghettos in Poland, but also from France, Holland, Belgium, the Reich Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia and the territory of the former Reich. Between March and May, the majority of the Jews deported from Greece arrived in Auschwitz. Deportations from Italy finally began in October 1943 and continued at regular intervals until mid-1944. Trains from the first three countries also rolled to Auschwitz in somewhat reduced numbers until the late summer of 1944. The beginning of the "Final Solution" in Hungary in April of the same year changed the situation dramatically. During the months of May and June, around 380,000 Jews arrived from Hungary, more than all the deportations of 1943 put together⁷⁴. Although the majority of them were directly exposed to the now enlarged and perfected extermination

⁷² APMO, Osw/Posener/ 14, p. 44.

⁷³ Cf. the overview of the transports to Auschwitz in Piper, Zahl, Table D, after **p.** 144.

⁷⁴ Cf. the information in Piper, Zahl, p. 145 ff.

After the deaths of the prisoners in Birkenau, the initially spared, able-bodied Hungarians also shaped the image of prisoner society in Monowitz.

The proportion of prisoners of Jewish descent in the camp's workforce was correspondingly high; it rose from around 70 percent in the early days to over 90 percent in the final months before the evacuation⁷⁵. The largest non-Jewish group within the Monowitz camp were the Poles, closely followed by the Russians. Only about half as numerous as the Poles, the German prisoners were nevertheless the most influential group in the camp, as they were almost without exception in privileged positions.

In addition to their nationality or denomination, the prisoners were also differentiated according to their reason for imprisonment. Around nine out of ten were therefore in the "political" category; by definition, this mainly included communists and social democrats, but the SS apparently used this term for any form of opposition to the regime. As a rule, Jewish prisoners were therefore also subsumed under this category and marked with an isosceles red triangle, the so-called angle. The remaining small proportion consisted of around eight percent "asocials" and around five percent "criminals". The former wore a black triangle on their drill suits, the latter a green one. If the tip of the green triangle was pointing downwards, the prisoner was a "BVler". This abbreviation actually stood for "befristeter Vorbeugehäftling", but in camp jargon they were only referred to as "Berufsverbrecher" (professional criminals) because of the great brutality they usually displayed. If the tip was pointing upwards, this meant an "SVler", a "Sicherungsverwahrter", a person in preventive detention. Most of them had no criminal record or conviction, but only had to expect a trial after a German victory.

In contrast to other concentration camps, the prisoners in Monowitz did not wear the angle directly above or below the number, but had both markings attached to a white linen strip measuring approximately four by twelve centimetres. This was sewn onto both the jacket, on the left side at about heart height, and on the right trouser leg below the trouser pocket. Within the triangle, all non-German nationalities were also marked with the first letter of their country of origin. Jewish prisoners, on the other hand, could always be identified by a kind of Star of David, as they had to wear a yellow triangle pointing upwards underneath their mostly red angles. All "non-Aryan" prisoners also had their number tattooed on their left forearm⁷⁶. The different angles on the prisoners' suits were a clearly visible expression of the hierarchical organization in the camp. For experienced prisoners, prisoner functionaries and the SS, they indicated from a distance how a prisoner was to be treated. Without having to concern themselves with the individual, they could tell at a glance whether a prisoner deserved respect due to his low prisoner number, for example, or had little chance of surviving the next few weeks as a new Jewish arrival. These

⁷⁵ **APMO**, Osw/Posener/ 14, p. 6; cf. Czech, Kalendarium, p. 960.

⁷⁶ **APMO**, Osw/Posener/ 14, p. 28.

This superficial but clear categorization corresponded to the strictly hierarchical structure of the internal organization of the Monowitz camp, to which we now turn.

The camp SS

The sole purpose of the new "Buna camp" was to house able-bodied prisoners whose labor was to be used as efficiently as possible on the IG construction site. Initially, the SS therefore did not run it as an independent camp, but as a sub-camp of the Auschwitz concentration camp. As a result, Monowitz did not have its own commandant's office; the administrative facilities continued to be under the management of the main camp and only comprised the departments necessary for the accommodation and security of the prisoner laborers. An independent political department did not exist here, nor did a separate SS camp doctor. Otherwise, however, the structure of the camp largely corresponded to that of other large concentration camps⁷⁷. This also applied to the security facilities. In accordance with its function as a labor pool, Department III played a leading role in the Buna camp. Within the SS administration, it was responsible for all tasks essential to the deployment of labor.

Vincenz Schöttl⁷⁸ held the position of camp commander from the day the camp was opened until its evacuation in early 1945. The SS-Obersturmführer, described by prisoners as a "quiet officer", was responsible for maintaining camp order and providing the requested work detachments. Höß had already transferred Schöttl, who had been transferred from Neuengamme concentration camp to Auschwitz, to the Buna-Werke command in mid-July 1942⁷⁹. After only four days in his new position, however, the camp lockdown had interrupted the deployment of prisoners. Although the thirty-something from Appersdorf in Bavaria, the father of four children, was present during punishments of prisoners, he is said not to have taken an active part in them. The "old fighter" was much more interested in ensuring he had a sufficient supply of alcohol and other stimulants, which he had "organized" by individual Kapos⁸⁰.

A single person was also in charge of the central "Labor Deployment" department from the founding of the camp until its dissolution. The most important task

Wilhelm Stolten's job was to provide the IG-Bau management with as many prisoners as possible who were capable of working. He regularly discussed issues relating to the general organization of work with most of them, as a former locksmith at IG Auschwitz recalls⁸¹. Although Stolten did not distinguish himself as a particular thug, he was partly responsible for the deaths of many prisoners. He no longer saw them as human beings, but reduced his perception to the purely quantitative

⁷⁷ For the "classic" structure of a concentration camp and its departments, see Broszat, *Konzentrationslager*, vol. 2, S. 58 f.

⁷⁸ BAB, Personnel file Schöttl (born. 30.6.1905 in Appersdorf); SS-Obersturmführer; NSDAP member no. 1 04083; joined 1.12. 1928, resigned 1.7. 1929; rejoined 1.2.1 931 .

⁷⁹ Cf. Czech, *Kalendarium*, p. 249.

⁸⁰ APMO, Osw/Posener/14, p. 13.

⁸¹ Nuremberg doc. NI- 1 1051. statement Wagner. 3.9. 1947, S. 3.

ve estimation of their remaining manpower. What his instructions for He was not interested in what this meant for the individual prisoner. According to one former prisoner, Stolten was "a calculator who regarded the prisoners as nothing more than commodities"⁸². Although he hardly ever inflicted violence on any prisoner himself, his signature sent thousands of weakened prisoners to certain death through exhaustion or subsequent selection. He also demonstrated his unscrupulousness in his dealings with the prisoners in his department, with whom he had to deal on a daily basis: when he caught one of them trying to influence the division of the work detachments in the prisoners' interests, he had him taken away to Birkenau. Anyone who survived Stolten's ruthless actions would remember his deeds. After the liberation in 1945, former prisoners allegedly recognized Stolten in Mecklenburg and beat him to death.

On the construction site, the prisoner detachments were under the supervision of the "work detachment leader", who had to ensure discipline and sufficient work performance with his men. Hauptscharführer Bernhard Rakers, who had been transferred from Sachsenhausen, distinguished himself in this role with particularly brutal mistreatment. After serving his sentence for embezzlement in the "commandant's bunker"⁸³, he was sent directly to Monowitz. There, his extraordinary criminal energy was not only directed against prisoners, who suffered from his brutal beatings. Even members of the SS were not safe from him: prisoners who were dependent on Rakers provided him with information which he used to blackmail his colleagues. He often took advantage of his official presence on the construction site to personally enrich himself through theft. Rakers gave free rein to his arbitrariness until the factory management protested against his behavior, as Curt Posener, a former member of the communist resistance group, reports: "His goings-on in the work area even aroused great bitterness among old Nazi I.G. Farben employees and engineers, as Rakers did not adhere to any regulations. He forced his way into all the rooms he thought he was interested in, sometimes using violence. None of the German women working there were safe from his often violent harassment. He had prisoners who caught his eye in the grounds stripped naked, regardless of whether other people were nearby or not. In the compound itself, he carried out the most brutal mistreatment of prisoners, but also of forced laborers. He was replaced following a complaint from the management of I.G. Farben."⁸⁴

This apparently did not provide the camp commander with sufficient grounds for a disciplinary punishment or another punitive transfer; Rakers' "qualities" seemed to be urgently needed in Monowitz. After the IG complaint, the man in his late thirties from the Osnabrück district merely moved to the position of Rapportführer, which was frequently reassigned in the Buna camp. In this role, Rakers was responsible for conducting roll calls, among other things, and received his instructions directly from the camp commander. All seven men entrusted with this office during the camp's existence were

⁸² APMO, Osw/Posener/ 14, p. 17.

⁸³ In camp jargon, "bunker" meant prison or detention block.

⁸⁴ APMO, Osw/Posener/ 14, p. 14 ff.

SS men were sub-leaders, who in turn were subordinate to the block leaders of the camp. Usually with the rank of SS-Unterscharführer, they were responsible for security and order in one or more blocks⁸⁵.

As a branch of the main camp, the Political Department in Monowitz was also only staffed by SS subordinates. Its main task was to investigate and punish violations of the camp regulations. The SS men obtained the necessary information through interrogations, the results of which were usually influenced by brutal methods of torture, and through informers. For the punishment of prisoners, there was a "bunker" in the Buna subcamp, into which a "standing bunker" was also integrated. This was a dark cell with such a small floor area that prisoners could neither sit nor squat in it, but only stand. Days without food and with only limited air exchange through a small ventilation slit were intended to wear the suspects down for the next interrogation. Quite a few of those who had already been weakened by hunger, illness or beatings died in the standing bunker. The decision about the release from the bunker and all other important matters obla of the Political Department of the Auschwitz main camp⁸⁶.

A separate commandant's office was only set up in the "Buna camp" in November 1943, after the previous commandant Höß and the head of Office **D I** in the **WVHA**, Arthur Liebehenschel, had swapped functions. The background to this change was the findings of the commission led by SS Judge Konrad Morgen to uncover and eliminate corruption within the camp staff⁸⁷. In addition to the head of the camp Gestapo, Maximilian Grabner, and many others, this purge also affected a particular protégé of Höß, namely Rapportführer Gerhard Palitzsch. The involvement of senior officers of the camp administration in Auschwitz made the commandant, who was at least formally responsible, appear untenable in this position. However, the knowledge he had acquired by then in the extermination of the Jews made him indispensable to the SS leadership. His transfer to the **WVHA** was tantamount to a promotion. In his new position, he was now able to transfer the experience he had gained in Auschwitz to the entire camp system.

As one of his first tasks, SS-Obersturmbannführer Liebehenschel tackled the reorganization of the entire Auschwitz camp complex ordered by Pohl. The new commandant turned the former Birkenau and Buna subcamps into formally independent camps, but in his function as SS site commander he continued to claim supreme decision-making authority. As a result, the "Buna camp" was given supervision over the other subcamps of KL Auschwitz. Liebehenschel referred to this entire complex as "Auschwitz III" - next to Auschwitz I, the former main camp, and Auschwitz II, Birkenau.

Liebehenschel appointed SS-Hauptsturmführer Heinrich Schwarz as commandant of the new camp⁸⁸, who had already been acting as deputy to the deputy commander since August 1943.

⁸⁵ Cf. Czech, Kalendarium, p. 1021. APMO, Osw/Posener/14, p. 14.

⁸⁶ APMO, Osw/Posener/14, p. 21.

⁸⁷ Cf. on the following Lasik, Höss, p. 94 f.

⁸⁸ Location and commandant's orders, StB 53/43, 22.1.1.1 1943.

Höb had proven himself⁸⁹. For his new task, the man from Munich Schwarz, who had already served as a civilian detachment in the Epp Freikorps, was particularly suitable for this role due to his previous position as head of the labor deployment department at KL Auschwitz⁹⁰. In addition, the trained reproduction photographer had years of experience in concentration camps in Mauthausen, Oranienburg and Birkenau. As commandant of Monowitz, Schwarz⁹¹ only appeared in the camp on exceptional occasions, for example when it was necessary to personally carry out a selection in all the work detachments. Also during executions, which were often carried out at his behest, he was present at the site. The brutal actions of the SS guards during the evacuation were also based on orders given personally by Schwarz⁹².

The "Buna camp" was the largest single camp within Auschwitz III and was soon given the new name "Monowitz labor camp"⁹³. The quantitative development during 1944 and probably also the increased economic importance finally led to the Auschwitz III camp complex being renamed "Monowitz concentration camp" in November 1944⁹⁴. Less than two months before the evacuation of the camps in Auschwitz, the "Buna camp" had thus become a completely independent concentration camp.

To guard the camp and the labor detachments, Schwarz had the "Buna guard company" and the "fifth guard company" of KL Auschwitz. These troops were responsible for securing the camp premises from the outside and for securing and disciplining the prisoners deployed on the Buna site. Although the foremen and plant security were also authorized to issue instructions and report to the IG construction site, prisoners were officially only allowed to be punished by members of the SS in the camp. As the war situation worsened and the number of prisoners increased, the ratio of SS men to concentration camp inmates continued to change in favour of the latter. The direct guarding of the individual commandos used in the early days in Monowitz could therefore no longer be maintained. From mid-1943, the SS guards limited themselves to securing the outside of the construction site and to occasional patrols.

The SS troops who served in Auschwitz III came there exclusively via the main camp. Their composition and qualifications did not necessarily correspond to the SS's own criteria for the "elite order" of the "Third Reich". In

⁸⁹ Location and commandant's orders, SSStB, 18.8.1943.

⁹⁰ Cf. Czech, Kalendarium, p. 479.

⁹¹ BAB, personal file Schwarz (born 14.6.1906 in Munich); SS-Hauptsturmführer; NSDAP member no. 786871; joined 1.1.1931. Schwarz had been working in concentration camps since the outbreak of the war. He was sent from Mauthausen to Auschwitz and Monowitz and became commandant of KL Natzweiler after the evacuation. He was sentenced to death by a French military tribunal in 1947 for the crimes committed there. The sentence was carried out; see Auschwitz in the eyes of the SS, S. 243.

⁹² APMO, Osw/Posener/14, p. 12.

⁹³ Location and commandant's orders, StB 54/43, 1.12.1943.

⁹⁴ Location and commandant's orders, StB 29/44, 25.1.1944.

In addition to older SS men, most of those transferred to the "Buna camp" were those who had been guilty of crimes in other camps

s. From the end of 1943, an increasing number of ethnic Germans from Yugoslavia, Poland and Hungary joined the SS Death's Head units⁹⁵. After the Allied invasion in June 1944, the SS also took over older Wehrmacht personnel for Auschwitz.

into their ranks. Those who no longer seemed fit for deployment on the western front were usually involuntarily assigned to camp security⁹⁶. The number and qualifications of the SS garrison on the one hand, and the size of the camp and the complexity of its administration on the other, thus developed in exactly opposite directions from the beginning of 1943.

The greatly increased importance of the prisoners as laborers for armament projects after the end of the war led to an enormous expansion of the Auschwitz III camp complex. In 1943 and 1944, at least 24 new satellite camps were established, which were administered centrally by Monowitz. The camp administration therefore increasingly lost track of what was happening in its area of responsibility. Shortly before the evacuation in January 1945, Commandant Schwarz had 2,006 SS men and 15 female guards at his disposal to secure the 39 camps of KL Monowitz with a total of 35,081 inmates. Since

There were a good 17 prisoners for every guard, which was roughly the average figure for the other concentration camps⁹⁷. In the final phase of its existence, the number of prisoners in the Monowitz camp complex exceeded that of the two other concentration camps.

their large camp in Auschwitz.

While the first Rapportführer in Monowitz, Hauptscharführer Remmele⁹⁸, had attempted to introduce camp regulations based on the Dachau model, his successors soon realized the futility of this endeavour. The arbitrary controls of "bed construction", for example, with subsequent punishment for alleged disorder, as known from other camps, could only be applied in "Buna" at the very beginning with the help of a few "temporary advance prisoners". The rapid growth of the camp, but about

also the sheer lack of blankets, soon made the corresponding SS harassment largely impossible⁹⁹, although in some blocks this apparently occurred until 1944¹⁰⁰. Perhaps even more than in other concentration camps, the SS in the "Buna camp" was dependent on the help of prisoners to establish and maintain a functioning camp order. In the almost ten years of the

⁹⁵ The barracked SS troops assigned to guard the concentration camps also bore the designation "SS Totenkopfverbände" (SS skull units). There was a skull and crossbones on the right collar patch of their uniforms.

⁹⁶ APMO, Osw/Posener/14, p. 10.

⁹⁷ BAB, NS 3/439, p. 21-2, list of the number of guards and prisoners in the concentration camps, 15.1.1945. Cf. also Tuche!, Inspektion.

⁹⁸ Remmele himself had previously worked at KL Dachau, where he had shown himself to be a brutal thug. Cf. the testimony of the IG employee and former inmate of KL Dachau, Eduard v. Baarenfeld, Nümbg. doc. NI-9817, Baarenfeld statement, 2.8.1947.

⁹⁹ APMO, Osw/Posener/14, p. 56.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Levi, Mensch, p. 67.

The SS had developed an ingenious system to secure this support from the time the concentration camps existed until the opening of Monowitz.

The prisoner functionaries and their special position

In the National Socialist view of human society, the inmates of the concentration camps were at the lowest level. Excluded from public life like pariahs, they were by no means a homogeneous group. Although they were all prisoners and handed over to the SS without any legal protection, there were many different gradations within this system of bondage. Depending on their "racial" and national origin, but also on their mental stability, prisoners in Monowitz, as in other concentration camps, had very different prospects of survival on arrival at the camp. The strict hierarchical structure within the camp thus almost seems to mirror the "racial" and national differentiation within Nazi society as a whole¹⁰¹.

In Monowitz, the SS leaders, who had been trained in other concentration camps, were able to systematically develop an internal structure of the camp staff that was advantageous to their goals of oppression, exhaustion and extermination from the very beginning. Among the first prisoners that Höß assigned to the Monowitz camp in October 1942 was therefore a large group of long-time inmates of the main camp, around 90 percent of whom were Reich German BV prisoners. These were men who had been taken into custody for repeated criminal offenses and had already been successfully used to establish a system of total despotism during the construction of the main camp. Due to the green patch on their prisoner suits, most of the prisoners were usually referred to only as the "Greens". There were probably also some political prisoners in the camp jargon "Reds", from Buchenwald concentration camp, who were also supposed to help create a functioning camp organization¹⁰². True to the national socialist racial doctrine, these "Aryan" concentration camp inmates were given a special role. According to Himmler, they were to "re-establish the The corps of subordinates provided five or six times the number of foreign prisoners, the Poles, Russians, Czechs, French and the sub-human race. all of Europe. The German professional criminal, the German political asocial, he is the Kapo and the leader for the columns of Pollaks and the like"¹⁰³. German prisoners who, in the eyes of the SS, had particularly pronounced "leadership qualities" were not allowed to be imprisoned.

¹⁰¹ Graphic representation of this hierarchy in Sofsky, *Ordnung*, p. 150.

¹⁰² Langbein, *Menschen*, p. 169 f., describes the selection criteria used by the SS to choose "binder bearers".

¹⁰³ HZ, MA-315, p. 3795, Himmler's speech to representatives of the judiciary in Cochem, May 25, 1944.

lities" were even able to use them to secure their release from the concentration camp¹⁰⁴.

In camp parlance, the "sub-leaders" of the Reichsführer SS were known as "functionary prisoners" or "binder bearers" I 0⁵. These people, who stood out from the mass of prisoners, held important positions in the camp and in the work detachments. The highest-ranking of these prisoner functionaries was the camp elder, who was personally responsible to the SS for everything that happened in the camp. He wore a clearly visible black armband with the white inscription "LÄ". His All prisoners were under his command with the exception of the camp elder of the inmate infirmary¹⁰⁶. The block elders, who were responsible for maintaining the camp rules within their respective block, were directly subordinate to him. At the same time, however, they were also responsible to the block leader, usually a simple SS guard, for order, cleanliness and peace. Like every prisoner, they therefore had to be doubly obedient in the camp: on the one hand to their superiors within the prisoner hierarchy and on the other to all members of the SS. The at first glance confusing names for the various functions and posts within the camp can be easily distinguished, as a

"-elder" always refers to a prisoner position, a "-leader" always to an SS function.

The block elders were identified by a red armband with their function and block number sewn onto it in white letters. The block elders were usually assisted by two parlor servants, who were responsible for fetching food and providing clothing, among other things. A block scribe was responsible for the proper recording of the number of inmates in the block.

Depending on the national composition of a block, the coldest block members might also have interpreters at their disposal.

A second, independent pillar of the "prisoner self-administration" was responsible for maintaining order outside the accommodation. The camp kapo (yellow armband with black letters), who in turn was directly responsible to the camp elder, supervised the work detachments deployed within the camp. In addition to developing the camp, prisoners were mainly deployed in small workshops, where they carried out maintenance work, but often also had to fulfill special requests from SS men. Each detachment was headed by its own Kapo, who was personally responsible for the fulfillment of orders. On the other hand, he controlled all processes that took place in the "camp public",

¹⁰⁴ Over the course of the war, the SS increasingly offered "green" prisoner functionaries in particular the chance to join the Dirlewanger SS special unit. These units, made up entirely of former concentration camp prisoners, were also used in massacres of civilians. Among the political prisoners, who had gained their "freedom" in this way, many defected to the enemy troops. Cf. Langbein, Menschen, p. 189. On this topic in general, see also Auerbach, Dirlewanger; Klausch, An tifaschisten.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Langbein, Menschen, p. 169 ff.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. chap. IV.5. and 6.

¹⁰⁷ APMO, Osw/Posener/ 14, p. 7.

outside the blocks but inside the perimeter fence: The camp chaplain was responsible for ensuring that roll calls ran smoothly and, together with his assistants, for "cleanliness and order" and a functioning food distribution system. If prisoners were missing from the morning roll call, he also led the search for the "work-shy". To put it bluntly, the camp kapo was the top guardian of camp order and in this role was responsible to both the camp elder and the SS.

To a much greater extent than in other concentration camps, the prisoners from Monowitz had to carry out productive work outside their own camp. While in the main camp and in Birkenau, less than half of the inmates were used primarily for camp construction, around 80 percent of the Monowitz camp staff marched to work on the construction site of the Buna plant every day. This orientation of the camp towards productive use of the prisoners meant that the third pillar of prisoner surveillance outside the camp grounds was particularly strong in Monowitz, alongside the two pillars of the internal camp organization. Due to the limited number of guards, the use of labor on the Buna construction site could only function with the help of the extensive deployment of orderlies from among the prisoners. From a certain size (about 50 to 1,000 men), each work detachment on the IG construction site had its own Kapo, who had to ensure that the assigned workload was fulfilled. As with the camp Kapo, his badge was a yellow armband with the black inscription "Kapo". Sub-units or small detachments were each headed by a foreman who passed on the work instructions received from the foremen of the civilian companies or the IG to the individual prisoners. If a detachment grew to several hundred prisoners, the SS appointed a head Kapo, to whom several Kapos were then subordinate.

In the first year of prisoner deployment on the IG Farben construction site, before the construction of Monowitz, there was only one head Kapo, to whom all the Kapos responsible for the approximately 1,200 prisoners were subordinate. He was responsible for the correct recording of the numbers and names of the prisoners deployed and - together with members of the site management - for checking the work results at the end of the shift. During the day, he also had to supervise the individual work detachments on the construction site. The camp management appointed an experienced prisoner of war to this important post, whose career can illustrate a little of Himmler's idea of an "Unterführer": Bernhard Bonitz had been sent to KL Sachsenhausen as a "preventive prisoner" in March 1937 after serving repeated sentences for theft and had made a name for himself there as a "green" block leader. Together with 29 other German prisoners who had also proved to be reliable helpers of the SS, he was sent to the newly opened KL Auschwitz on May 20, 1940. These 30 prisoners formed the basis of the "prisoner self-administration" in the Auschwitz camps.

At the beginning, Bonitz was deployed as the foreman of a group of Jewish residents of the town of Auschwitz who had to carry out clearing work in the buildings of the main camp that had previously been used as barracks. In mid-June 1940, when the first

When the "regular" Polish prisoners arrived at the camp, he became their block elder.

After his work as head prisoner of the Buna commando from early summer to late fall 1941, the "preferred prisoner" worked in various other camps until he was drafted into the Dirlwanger unit in June 1944¹⁰⁸. During his entire stay in the Auschwitz camps, Bonitz gained a reputation as a particularly "strict and hard" prisoner of conscience. Witnesses accuse him of ~~hundreds~~ of cases of maltreatment and murder.¹⁰⁹

The work in the camp's administrative offices gave rise to a different type of prisoner functionary. Their task was not to discipline prisoners; they were not authorized to issue instructions to any prisoner. Reporting directly to the SS, these prisoners were responsible for the proper documentation of camp operations. In the prisoners' office, they recorded the names of all prisoners in alphabetical order in the so-called ledger, under the direction of the record keeper. At the same time, the prisoners, sorted by number, were kept in the prisoner file, which contained all known personal details. When new transports arrived, the clerks determined their distribution to the individual blocks and drew up the transport lists required for transfers. They also recorded the daily strength report at the Roll call on ¹¹⁰. In the "prisoner labor service" department, "Kommandierte", as this type of prisoner was called for short in the camp, wrote reports on the work done and put together the work detachments.

Working in both departments required sufficient knowledge of office organization, accuracy and some experience in dealing with files. In order to be able to classify the deportation transports arriving from many European countries into the categories specified by the SS, a wide range of language skills were also soon required. The more complex the national structure of the camp and the more differentiated the work detachments became, the more the administration had to rely on the skills of the prisoners responsible. However, this also strengthened their position in relation to the SS, who only took on supervisory tasks. The actual administrative processes were soon only overseen by the prisoners in the office, which gave them more room for maneuver. Nevertheless, any manipulation meant a great risk; even the mere suspicion on the part of the SS could be fatal for the prisoner.

Due to their direct contact with the SS and their precise overview of what was going on in the camp, the prisoners entrusted with administrative functions developed into influential control centers within the camp. They possessed "social capital"¹¹¹: although they had no disciplinary authority over other inmates, they were able to use their information to the advantage, but also to the disadvantage, of their colleagues.

¹⁰⁸ StA Frankfurt a.M., judgment in criminal case 4 Ks 1/67, 14.6. 1968, p. 44 f.

¹⁰⁹ Even if in many cases the witness statements were not sufficient for a criminal conviction due to the long time lag and the fact that individual guilt was often difficult to prove, the large number of witness statements nevertheless provides an accurate overall picture of the way in which functions were carried out.

prisoners in the Auschwitz camp complex. Frankfurt am Main District Court, judgment in criminal case 4 Ks 1/67. 14.6. 1968, p. 144.

¹¹⁰ Frankfurt am Main District Court, judgment in criminal case 4 Ks 1/67, 14.6. 1968, p. 36.

¹¹¹ Sofsky, Order, p. 156.

and thus fundamentally influenced their life chances. Many prisoner functionaries were at least partially dependent on the knowledge of the commanders and showed themselves accordingly. Their direct contact with the SS gave them additional authority. Just one negative word to a member of the Political Department could be enough to trigger investigations against a prisoner. Even if the suspicion turned out to be unfounded afterwards, the SS's brutal interrogation methods were deterrent enough that no one wanted to mess with the commandos. As a result, they were undoubtedly part of the "camp VIPs", which is why they are counted among the functional prisoners, even if they were not strictly speaking "bond bearers" like the Kapos or block elders.

The prisoner functionaries were responsible for ensuring that everyday life in the camp ran as smoothly as possible and that the rules laid down by the camp administration were followed. In this way, they acted as an extension of the SS, who were thus able to limit themselves to securing the camp grounds and carrying out occasional checks in the camp. Without the cooperation of the prisoners, many times more guards would have been needed. The prisoner functionaries were rewarded for this auxiliary work by being exempted from the general work obligation: Their work was to discipline and drive the prisoners under their command.

The situation was similar in the work detachments on the IG site: the Ka po acted as a link between the civilian foremen and managers on the one hand and the inmate workers on the other. He assigned work to the individual prisoners and was personally responsible for the fulfillment of the work quota. If a foreman or Kapo failed in this respect, he might initially only receive a warning, but after reporting to the SS he could expect to be punished with a caning. What the "binmen" feared most, however, was being demoted to ordinary prisoner after repeated failure.

Being transferred back to the normal ranks meant more than just the loss of exemption from physical labor, although this alone had a considerable impact on a concentration camp inmate's chances of survival – not only in Monowitz. Working as a prisoner functionary was associated with further privileges, only some of which were officially defined: "Bindenträger" enjoyed preferential board and lodging, from block and camp elders to single rooms, and they were in an unusual position of power. In absolute terms, this was very limited, as they were still prisoners and therefore did not have the opportunity to freely determine their own living conditions. However, within the camp cosmos, they were able to improve their living conditions to a large extent. Although they were formally without rights as concentration camp inmates, they had considerable power of disposition over other prisoners. The hierarchical distance between an ordinary inmate and the camp elder was greater than it could ever be between people in a free society.

A functional prisoner was the master of life or death. If he expected to gain an advantage from beating or killing a subordinate inmate, he could do so without great risk. The murder of an ordinary prisoner

did not usually result in any sanctions, and often did not even attract the attention of the SS ¹¹². A prisoner functionary only put himself in danger if he came into conflict with the interests of the SS without knowing it, for example if his beatings hit an informer of the camp administration. The way in which the block elders and Kapos made use of this power of disposal granted by the SS was largely at the discretion of the respective camp elder; he "shaped the prisoner camp within the scope of his possibilities" ¹³. A look at the first camp elder of "Camp Buna" clearly shows the qualities the camp administration expected from the "top" inmate.

Josef Windeck, known as Jupp, was born in 1903 as the son of a construction worker in Rheydt. After his school days in neighboring Mönchengladbach, his father had taken him to his workplace, where the son did unskilled work. At the age of 33, Windeck was sent to a concentration camp for the first time; he had allegedly asked colleagues to leave the construction site. He was therefore listed as a "political prisoner" in KL Esterwegen-Papenburg in 1936, then transferred to Sachsenhausen and released in the summer of the following year. In October 1937, a court sentenced Windeck to two and a half years in prison. Although he had only committed minor property offenses, the judges considered his 23 previous convictions and the resistance at the time of his arrest to be aggravating factors. After serving his sentence, Windeck was not released, but transferred to Düsseldorf police prison in the spring of 1940 and from there to Sachsenhausen. He arrived in Auschwitz on August 29, 1940 in a transport of 100 prisoners, where the black label of "asocial" was sewn onto his prisoner suit. Appointed as a Kapo from the outset, Windeck was soon "promoted" to the position of camp Kapo of the main camp. He proudly demonstrated his newly acquired position to the outside world by constantly carrying a dog whip.

When the prisoners began working on the IG construction site in April 1941, he became Kapo of a work detachment there. He remained in this post until the spring of 1942, despite a ten-day stay in the bunker due to extortion from other prisoners and a break due to the weather. After Windeck had once again acted as camp Kapo of the main camp, he "marched" to his new post on October 28, 1942 "as the newly appointed camp elder with around 600 prisoners to Monowitz" ¹⁴. Here, too, he flaunted his new function with his entire appearance, "wearing riding boots, breeches and a dark jacket, as he regularly did in Monowitz" ¹⁵. The political prisoners who came with him to "Buna" were already well aware of his reputation as a thug. In his new role, he again used the dog whip, with which he is said to have beaten fellow inmate Löhner-Beda ¹⁶ to death. He also enriched himself with the help of some like-minded people" in the ownership of the new arrivals, of which the first rapporteur

¹¹² StA Frankfurt a.M., judgment in criminal case 4 Ks 1/67, 14.6. 1968, pp. 55 and 69.

¹¹³ Frankfurt am Main District Court, judgment in criminal case 4 Ks 1/67, 14.6. 1968, p. 41.

¹¹⁴ Frankfurt am Main District Court, judgment in criminal case 4 Ks 1/67, June 14, 1968, p. 47.

The camp's head prisoner, SS-Hauptscharführer Remmele, profited from this. Windeck is also said to have sexually abused young prisoners. After the dismissal of his protector Remmele, some political prisoners finally succeeded in having him replaced: In the prisoners' writing room, they had become aware of Windeck's intention to send his wife a necklace and passed this information on to the Political Department. Although he was sent to the bunker for two weeks and was subsequently sent to the punishment company in Birkenau, Windeck became camp captain again a few weeks later in the men's camp B II d ¹¹⁷. A man like Windeck was obviously irreplaceable for the interests of the camp SS.

Over the next few months, the post of camp elder at Monowitz changed in rapid succession. At first, the SS appointed a confidant of Windeck's, Franz Raschke, a BV prisoner from Upper Silesia with similar "qualities" to Windeck, but he was dismissed from the camp after a short time. He was replaced by Hans Georg Scholle, a BV prisoner, who was corrupt but less brutal towards his comrades, until he himself became the victim of an intrigue. Finally, at the end of 1943, Paul Kozwara from Breslau, another "green" prisoner, came to head the Monowitz camp and was to remain there until the evacuation. In memoirs, Kozwara is described as a very violent and vain person who, although outwardly maintaining good contacts with the political groups in the camp, did his best to make trouble for them.

sought. Under his responsibility, there are also said to have been "excesses in and around the bordello" ¹¹⁸.

The brutality of the "green" camp elders was often made extremely clear to newly committed prisoners as soon as they arrived. A Dutch lawyer who came to Monowitz in August 1943 reported that the camp elder had greeted them with the following words: "This is a concentration camp, people are beaten here, even if you are innocent and don't deserve to be beaten. Here you either work or die." ¹¹⁹ This openness - like other characteristics of the camp elders - was often criticized by the block elders and kapos, i.e. the next level in the hierarchy. The "tent eldest" told the Dutchmen assigned to him that he was a triple murderer and underlined this by sending one of them into the high-voltage camp fence: The "tent elder" declared to the Dutchmen left to him for accommodation that he was a triple murderer, and emphasized this by sending one of this group into the high-voltage camp fence.

¹¹⁵ StA Frankfurt a.M., judgment in the criminal case 4 Ks 1 /67, June 14, 1968, p. 90.

¹¹⁶ This is the writer and editor Dr. Fritz Löhner, who also goes by the pseudonym Beda". Survivors' reports also include the different name version "Be da-Löna", which is probably due to the almost exclusively oral communication among the prisoners. In addition to several libretti for Franz Lehar, Löhner also wrote the "Buchenwald" and the "Bunalied", which is why he enjoyed a certain degree of fame and support among the prisoners. Various statements accused Windeck of murdering the Jew Löhner-Beda, but it was not possible to clarify his death in the trial against Windeck. APMO, Osw/Posener/14, StA Frankfurt a.M., judgment in the criminal case 4 Ks 1 /67, 14.6.1968, p. 170 ff.

¹¹⁷ APMO, Osw/Posener/14, p. 31.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Nuremberg doc. NI- 12204, Wagenaar testimony, 27. 10. 1947, p. 2.

Particularly in the initial phase of the Monowitz concentration camp, a large number of the prisoner functionaries appear to have acted so brutally against their subordinates; when the IG then tried to deploy the prisoners more efficiently, they behaved somewhat more cautiously. However, not every beating was based on a mere desire for a public demonstration of power. As a rule, Kapos beat and maltreated the prisoners in their commandos because they were working too slowly in their eyes. The more exhausted a prisoner was due to hard work and malnutrition, the more beatings he could expect. The beatings were an expression of self-assertion and helplessness in equal measure. If a Kapo wanted to keep his privileges, he had to drive the prisoners to work.

Many foremen and other IG employees encouraged and bribed the Kapos with cigarettes or schnapps so that they would urge their comrades even more rigorously ¹²⁰. Under the conditions of camp life, there were not many opportunities for motivation. The majority of the Kapos therefore showed no restraint in their choice of means for the sake of their own "good" lives. In the extreme situation of the concentration camp, this kind of behavior is, within certain limits, acceptable.

enforceable. It should also not be overlooked that the Kapos were not the perpetrators of this "general system of punishment"¹²¹, but merely enforcers. Many of them were still guilty of this against their fellow prisoners because, as the former camp Kapo Windeck himself later admitted, the "chance of survival of a functional prisoner [...] did not depend on the *fact that* he was a thug" ¹²².

In camp jargon, the term "thug" therefore did not refer to a Kapo who had beaten a prisoner in a particular situation. Rather, it referred to those who beat for pleasure, even if no IG or SS guards were present. Despite their powerlessness and the gruelling work, prisoners often developed a great sensitivity to the motives of their Kapos. If one of them struck because the commando was being observed by the IG inspectors or they were only passing by at a distance, this could also be advantageous for the workers as a whole, as they were then often spared a more thorough inspection. In the case of the block elders, it was often more difficult to decide whether they were beating out of sadistic motives or in the interests of the prisoners. The reports of eyewitnesses are also not to be believed without further ado: if, during SS inspections, a block elder tried to stop exhausted prisoners from sinking down and stop them from standing up straight by slapping them in the face, this may have looked brutal. But it is possible that a prisoner who had been beaten in this way owed his life to these blows, even if this was not apparent to new arrivals in the camp. Anyone who had managed to survive in the camp for more than a few weeks usually had a good sense of the reasons why a prisoner had been "tied up". Experienced prisoners were also prepared to accept a certain amount of beatings if this was the price they had to pay for having less strength.

¹²⁰ Nuremberg doc. NI- 10824, Kohn testimony, May 29, 1947, p. 3. Nuremberg doc. NI-98 18, statement Jakubik, 23.5.1 947, S. 4.

¹²¹ Nuremberg doc. NI- 12002, testimony Jähne, 22. 10.1 947, p. 1.

¹²² StA Frankfurt a.M., judgment in the criminal case 4 Ks 1 /67, June 14, 1968, p. 41. The judgment quotes a statement by the defendant Windeck.

pace of work. In their eyes, the risk of dying from complete exhaustion and selection was much higher than from the beatings of a Kapo¹²³.

Violence on the part of the prisoner functionaries was thus part of the everyday experience of most prisoners. The SS camp administration allowed them to go unchallenged within a broad framework; after all, they too saw physical punishment as an effective means of keeping the mass of prisoners compliant. However, if a Kapo or block elder gave too much free rein to his violent instincts or operated too closely with the SS, his actions could be punished by others: While a "good" Kapo did not have to fear the withdrawal of his command, "thugs" ran the risk of being called to account by their fellow prisoners. Once a functional prisoner had begun to commit arbitrary abuse - in other words, once he had suppressed his own status as a prisoner and conformed to the SS henchmen - he was caught in a vicious circle: There was now no way back into the prisoner community. The SS had tried to organize the concentration camps in such a way that the prisoners were at the mercy of their arbitrariness and found themselves without rights. However, a system of sanctions had developed from the unwritten rules of the prisoners' coexistence. Violations against the interests of the prisoner community, for example when an informer was exposed, were usually punished with death¹²⁴. If a brutal prisoner wanted to avoid becoming a victim of the prisoner justice system at some point, he had to do everything he could to maintain the favor of the SS. Because his work for the SS only meant temporary backing for his actions, he did not acquire any claim to their support. Within the system of total arbitrariness that the SS had perfected to maintain its power in the camp, it could withdraw its support at any time, as it only granted "temporary protection of survival"¹²⁵. This complete dependence led to a loss of all moral standards for some prisoner functionaries, which is why they appeared to outsiders "in many cases worse than the SS"¹²⁶.

Maltreatment by the prisoners

The dependence on the top was countered by a barely regulated power at the bottom. For example, a Kapo could mistreat or kill the prisoners under his command without fear of punishment. A small number of mostly "green" functionaries used this space to satisfy their drive for power¹²⁷. Anyone who did not show them the expected subservience or who even in the

¹²³ Cf. Levi, *Mensch*, p. 138.

¹²⁴ Langbein, *Menschen*, p. 218 ff., describes several examples of this lynching by the prisoners. Spies or traitors had to expect to be stoned to death, drowned in the latrine, hounded into the electric fence or beaten to death.

¹²⁵ Cf. Sofsky, *Order*, p. 148.

¹²⁶ Nuremberg Doc. NI- 1 0930, Doemming statement, 28.8.1947, p. 2. Against the background of the detailed information provided by former IG employee Rudolf Doemming, who also reported unsparingly on the behavior of the IG managers, this statement appears credible.

¹²⁷ On the following StA Frankfurt a.M., judgment in the criminal case 4 Ks 1 /67, 1 4.8. 1968, p. 42 f.; also Wohl, *Arbeit*, p. 44 ff.

If the prisoner was in the wrong place at the wrong time, he could fall victim to deadly "games" that were played alone or in the presence of like-minded SS men. In the so-called neck swing, a stick was placed across the prisoner's neck and the prisoner functionary stood on both ends of the stick. By shifting his weight from one leg to the other, he then "rocked" his victim to death. Bonitz, who was deployed as head captain of the Buna commando, among other things, was accused of at least 50 such murders by former prisoners¹²⁸.

Sometimes prisoners had to give their health or their lives for the mere demonstration of a new striking technique. They could also be punished in the camp with "sport" for alleged laziness or indiscipline. They had to perform physical exercises until they were completely exhausted, sometimes for hours on end. Any slacking off resulted in beatings and kicks, which could lead to death, as could sudden heart failure due to overexertion. The SS were usually only involved here in so far as they provided the lawless space within which the prisoners were at the mercy of the arbitrary actions of the prisoner functionaries. When guarding the work detachments, on the other hand, the SS and Kapos often worked together in such "games". In the early days in particular, Kapos took pleasure in making inexperienced prisoners leave their workplace without permission: they took the prisoner's cap off their victim's head and threw it to the ground a little way outside the imaginary boundaries of the work area. Anyone who then tried to retrieve the headgear that the Kapo had removed and thrown away¹²⁹ was shot by the SS guards "on the run". For many

It was also a matter of course for the "green" Kapos, i.e. those from the ranks of the German BV prisoners, to constantly maltreat the prisoners in their command with beatings, regardless of whether the required performance was achieved or not. There was always an occasion.

Josef Windeck, the first camp elder of "Camp Buna", was characterized by excessive cruelty, which he preferred to demonstrate within the camp grounds. He did not need any special occasion for this either, as two exemplary incidents show. Around Christmas time 1942, Windeck killed a 50-year-old German Jew who was part of a group that had brought the empty food tubs back to the kitchen after the evening roll call. Due to his failing health, the prisoner was unable to follow the ordered pace of his comrades. On his way back, as he passed in front of the room of camp elder Windeck, he rushed out. The man screaming loudly under the blows attracted the attention of his colleagues who had hurried ahead. Without

¹²⁸ StA Frankfurt a.M., judgment in the criminal case 4 Ks 1/67, 14.6. 1968, p. 142 ff. There was no conviction in these cases because the witnesses were unable to separate the individual incidents in their memories. While this is a necessary requirement for a criminal conviction, albeit one that is difficult to fulfill in these particular cases, the historical interpretation can be based on the factuality of the maltreatment described, the significance of which is strengthened by the large number of cases.

¹²⁹ The loss of a prisoner's cap was usually tantamount to a death sentence if this was determined during roll call; cf. also Frister, Mütze. p. 297 ff.

Windeck took notice of the prisoners, who were only about ten meters away, and "cursing loudly", as the judges quoted from the prisoners' reports in their verdict against Windeck ¹³⁰, "hit his victim several times in the face and stomach with both fists until the prisoner fell to the ground. Now Windeck kicked the prisoner's chest and stomach again and again with the slightly protruding heel of his riding boots." He only let go of him when the man stopped moving. After Windeck had withdrawn, the group of prisoners carried their comrade to his block, where they could no longer detect any signs of life in him.

Windeck murdered two more prisoners a few months later in a "Heingstonne". Next to the washing barracks between blocks seven and eight stood two of these water containers, which were just over one meter high and eighty centimetres wide. After an evening roll call in the first half of April 1943, the well-fed and strong Windeck "grabbed two Jewish prisoners by the back of the neck with one hand each" and pushed their heads next to each other into one of the water-filled barrels. Despite resistance and strong convulsions from the victims, Windeck managed to keep their heads under water until one "finally went limp and stopped moving". While this one fell motionless to the ground, Windeck began to kick his second victim with his boots until he, too, had no sign of life.

was no longer speaking. The porters requested by witnesses carried the two Jews on stretchers to the infirmary, where only their death could be determined ¹³¹.

Such a pronounced criminal energy and sadistic disposition, as it at Windeck must be assumed, was certainly not the rule even among the "green" prisoner functionaries. Nevertheless, many prisoners fell victim to such and similar atrocities. Just a few prisoner functionaries of Windeck's caliber were enough to spread an atmosphere of fear that characterized everyday life in the Monowitz camp.

Presumably the majority of the Kapos and other "celebrities" used their position primarily to ensure their own survival. They were not interested in arbitrary mistreatment as long as those under their control performed as required. If this was not the case, the "lazy" prisoners had to reckon with beatings so that the SS would not blame the Kapo for the poor results. This behavior arose from a kind of necessity: in order to secure his own life, the prisoner functionary was prepared to let others suffer. Under the camp conditions, there could be no such thing as a prisoner functionary with complete moral integrity who only carried out his position in the interests of the prisoners, or only for a very short time: The task of the prisoner functionary was to fulfill the requirements defined by the SS. Strictly speaking, standing up for the interests of his comrades in a spirit of solidarity was bound to come into conflict with this and inevitably led to the loss of his privileged position.

¹³⁰ StA Frankfurt a.M., judgment in criminal case 4 Ks 1/67, 14.6. 1968, p. 89 f.

¹³¹ StA Frankfurt a.M., judgment in the criminal case 4 Ks 1/67, June 14, 1968, p. 97 f.

The patterns of behavior of the prisoner functionaries towards the inmates were diverse and changed during the existence of the Monowitz camp, as did their social and national origins. The question therefore arises as to who could become a prisoner of conscience in Monowitz and whether this had an influence on the relationship with the prisoners.

"ordinary" prisoners.

Filling of the functional positions

The first 60 to 100 prisoner functionaries that Höß had entrusted with building the internal structure of the Monowitz camp in October 1942 were mainly so-called BV prisoners. What the SS particularly appreciated about these Reich-German men was that they generally functioned without pressure as compliant and brutal witnesses to their interests. In Monowitz, too, they fulfilled the expectations placed in them, as the example of Windeck has shown. Due to the rapid expansion of the camp, however, further posts soon had to be filled for which there were no longer enough "BVler" available. Over time, the SS camp administration also had to accept so-called political and "asocial" prisoners in disciplinary positions, even though their personality profile did not quite match the desired image of a functional prisoner who acted ruthlessly against others.

The rapid arrival of transports from many European countries caused the number of German prisoners in Monowitz to fall steadily. Their numbers were soon no longer sufficient to fill the available positions. The camp commander therefore had to cut back on the ideal hierarchical structure of the camp, so that prisoners of other nationalities, especially Polish, were soon accepted for these positions. Eventually, the SS even allowed Jews into the higher prisoner positions, which would not have been possible in the main camp¹³². However, in view of the large number of Jewish prisoners in Monowitz - nine out of ten inmates - this could hardly have been avoided. Such extensive integration of Jewish prisoners into the prisoners' self-administration, including at the level of disciplinary authority, was probably a specific feature of the Monowitz camp and its subcamps. However, according to the available sources, one principle was probably never ignored here either: As a matter of principle, Jews never had the authority to assign "Aryan" prisoners; for example, they could only become Kapo of a purely Jewish work detachment, which was the rule in Monowitz.

Among the commandos and doctors, on the other hand, Jewish prisoners were quite common in the main camp. The rapid increase in the number of prisoners also placed high demands on the administration in Monowitz, which could often only be met by Jewish prisoners. Efficient and precise office work had to be carried out, especially in the typing rooms and at the work detail, to which "Green" hardly had the necessary education. In addition, the transports of Jews arriving from many European countries brought with them roughly as many languages. Therefore, linguistically competent prisoner functionaries were an indispensable prerequisite for the smooth organization of the camp.

¹³² Cf. Langbein, Menschen. S. 197.

While the SS had initially filled the positions themselves, in practice this prerogative increasingly passed to the "camp celebrities": As a result, not only those who had attracted the attention of an SS man, but also those who had attracted the attention of a Kapo, could now climb up the prisoner hierarchy¹³³. For those who had no scruples and the necessary elbows, "promotion" in the camp was made easy¹³⁴. However, there was probably no compulsion to take on a function. Rejecting such an offer usually had no consequences¹³⁵. With this right to choose, the prisoner functionaries gained a further measure of power, as they could use it to get their friends or relatives a better position. These positions also became interesting for the resistance organizations active in the camp, which were able to ensure the survival of their members in this way.

Two main resistance groups were active in Monowitz. One was mainly made up of political prisoners, mostly from Buchenwald via German and Austrian communists. The other important group consisted of "Polish nationalists". The points of contact for the respective cohesion thus lay outside the camp cosmos. It was virtually impossible to form a completely new organization under the conditions of the Monowitz concentration camp. The anonymity of the mass of prisoners, their overwork, exhaustion and fear of reprisals spoke against it. Only those who were not exposed to the strongest extermination pressure in the camp, which the SS exerted first against the Poles and then against the Jews in accordance with their racial ideological goals, still had the strength to think about anything other than their own survival.

The mostly Reich-German communists occupied the highest rank within the camp hierarchy after the "Greens" and lived in comparatively favorable circumstances. Although the Polish prisoners had been in great danger of death in the early days of the Auschwitz camp, their status changed after the arrival of the large transports of Jews; now they were no longer the focus of the SS's attention and gained in "value" relative to the newly arriving prisoners. The possibility of receiving additional resources from outside and the mere fact of having survived for some time in the camp put them almost on an equal footing with the German communists. Like the latter, the Poles could fall back on at least rudimentary organizational structures from the time before their imprisonment.

Both the communist groups and the national Polish resistance had developed conspiratorial techniques in their underground work, which also proved helpful in the camp. Both groups initially tried to provide material aid to their respective inmate comrades¹³⁶. In some cases, individual prisoner functionaries in influential positions were also able to

¹³³ Nuremberg Doc. NI-7 184, testimony Afrine, 5.6.1 947, p. 4.

¹³⁴ Cf. Wohl, Arbeit, p. 53.

¹³⁵ Nuremberg Doc. NI-7 184, testimony Afrine, 5.6.1 947, p. 4; also Langbein, Menschen, p. 195.

¹³⁶ Nuremberg Doc. NI-1 0928, Staischak testimony, Sept. 3, 1947, p. 4.

develop a network of social relationships that could secure them a large following through occasional favors ¹³⁷. In contrast to this al

In contrast to the cooperation based purely on economic considerations, the existence of the originally politically motivated associations of National Poles and Communists was based on a kind of solidarity. The improvement of their material provision was therefore the goal and not the cause of the cooperation. Both models offered the opportunity to stand out from the mass of prisoners and thus significantly improve their own prospects of survival. Whether the po

The extent to which lithic groups also succeeded in "improving the living conditions of all prisoners" ¹³⁸as was stated in a verdict of the Frankfurt Auschwitz trials, must be examined in more detail. First, however, the focus should be on the living conditions of the prisoners.

3. Existence conditions

The day in the Monowitz concentration camp began with a gong that sounded in the roll call area at five o'clock in the summer and six o'clock in the winter. The following half hour was left for the prisoners to crowd into the few washrooms and latrines by the hundreds and thousands and to eat the "substitute coffee" prepared by special commandos as breakfast. The roll call took place at half past five, in winter at half past six; it usually lasted just under half an hour. After this, the work detachments that had been determined the previous evening had to assemble and form up for the march. The departure of the prisoners began after the SS guard chain had secured the work area. The detachments with the longest march were the first to move out; these were usually groups of prisoners working outside the guard chain, accompanied by a separate guard team. The so-called external commandos working on the Buna site then set off. Their Kapos had to indicate their strength as they passed through the gate. The commandos working in the camp had to report their strength to the office by ten o'clock. If there was fog, which was very common in the fall months, the departure of the work detachments was delayed. It could only begin when, in the eyes of the SS, "so-called security was guaranteed" ¹³⁹.

Once they arrived at their workplace, the prisoners had to work until twelve o'clock. During the one-hour lunch break, each prisoner was given three quarters of a liter of watery vegetable broth, the so-called "Buna soup". After the prisoners had again been determined to be full, they continued to work until six o'clock in summer and only until five o'clock or less in winter - depending on the onset of darkness. The return march was the same as in the morning, but in reverse order. When passing through the camp gate, the Kapos had to indicate their command strength again and then lead "their" people to the roll call area. The evening roll call, during which the prisoners

¹³⁷ Sofsky, *Ordnung*, p. 156, draws a comparison with the ancient clientele system.

¹³⁸ Frankfurt am Main District Court, judgment in the criminal case 4 Ks 1 /67, June 14, 1968, p. 31.

¹³⁹ According to APMO, *Osw/Posener/14*, p. 50.

The process of having to line up again block by block often took an hour, or considerably longer on special occasions. If there was no more work to be done in the camp, the prisoners could then go to their blocks. After they had eaten their meagre evening meal, they still had some free time, although this often had to be used for a visit to the infirmary. At nine o'clock in the evening, half an hour later in summer, a gong rang again to signal the start of the night's rest; after that, prisoners were only allowed to leave the block to go to the toilet. A restful sleep was impossible for most of the prisoners, despite their great exhaustion, because the blocks were completely overcrowded.

A regular block had 1,68 sleeping places in two or three-storey bunk beds. Just a few days after opening, the blocks were completely overcrowded. As a rule, two prisoners had to share a bed, in extreme cases even more. But even the "normal occupancy" offered the camp inmates far too little space. Compared to the occupancy with German prisoners or civilian workers, a prisoner only had half or even a third of the space. The lack of a recreation or dining room for ordinary prisoners exacerbated the lack of space: half a bed was not only sufficient as a place to sleep, it was all the "privacy" available to the prisoner. It was used both for eating and for drying damp clothes in the rain or in winter.

The stench that filled the whole block added to the feeling of oppression. Sweat-stained bodies that went days, sometimes weeks, without seeing water or soap, filthy clothes that could only be changed every six to eight weeks, and the fumes of sick prisoners with diarrhea, infectious diseases or open wounds made the air unbearable. The fumes from the urinals at the entrance to the barracks made the air, which was heated by district heating from the IG power station, even "thicker" in winter. Despite the windows being open, many prisoners often had to "gasp for air" during the night because the lack of oxygen prevented them from sleeping. The few work-free hours at night could hardly bring the prisoners the rest they had hoped for. Their cramped accommodation, increasing exhaustion and lack of hygiene meant an extremely high risk of infection. While the SS doctors therefore demanded an expansion of the quarantine facilities out of concern for the supervisory staff, the management of IG Auschwitz maintained its negative stance. Dürrfeld and his colleagues did not want any further investment for prisoners who were not fit for work. "On the contrary," SS doctor Entress later testified, "the constant insistence of the I.G. on labor made it difficult for us camp doctors to carry out quarantine"¹⁴⁰.

¹⁴⁰ Nümbg. doc. NI-6190, Entress statement, April 14, 1947, p. 7. The possible apologetic content of Entress' statement seems negligible at this point. It is also clear from the prisoners' testimony that the SS doctors did indeed endeavor to improve hygiene in the camp, as this was also in the interests of the SS guards. In order to achieve this goal, the SS camp administration even tolerated the theft of IG property that was needed by the prisoners in the infirmary. There was therefore a conflict of interest between the IG and the SS regarding the expansion of the medical and hygiene facilities in Monowitz.

The prisoner functionaries were not housed in such miserable conditions. The head of the block, the block clerk and the prison staff slept in a separate room; this was partitioned off within the "day room", which was located next to the large dormitory. Ordinary prisoners had no access to the "day room". In the prisoner blocks, it served as a multi-purpose room: the prisoner functionaries used it as a recreation and storage room, where they stored food or an "organized" change of clothes. Higher functionary prisoners, Reich Germans and other members of the "camp VIPs" were grouped together in special blocks anyway, each of which only housed up to around 50 prisoners. The camp elder, camp kapo and HKB camp elder even had their own rooms. Some "commandants" were housed in the blocks in which they also worked. Some of the Kapos and the internal camp commandos lived near their workshops. All prisoner functionaries lived in incomparably better conditions than the "masses" of prisoners, *albeit* with some differences. This did not only apply to their accommodation.

Functional prisoners were usually able to organize additional, high-quality items of clothing that had been taken from the newly arrived transports without difficulty. A "simple" camp inmate, on the other hand, only had one set of clothes: a prisoner suit made of blue and white striped cotton drill and a shirt. Kapos and block elders were much better equipped for the cold winters in Auschwitz with woolen sweaters and sometimes leather jackets. Even more important for survival, however, was the privilege of "Aryan" prisoners to wear leather shoes. Jewish prisoners had already had their leather shoes taken from them without exception when they were sent to Monowitz. In their place, they were given wooden shoes, which consisted of a wooden sole with a leather sole sewn on.

were „occupied. In many cases, this amounted to a death sentence, as even SS doctors were later forced to admit¹⁴¹. These hard, barely adaptable to the foot Shoes" inevitably led to blisters, open sores and eventually phlegmons¹⁴², especially for prisoners who had to walk long distances to or on the construction site. Only those who managed to get a job soon were able to obtain leather shoes. For all other Jewish prisoners, the only chance of obtaining better-fitting shoes was the "exchange of shoes" that took place every evening. Primo Levi describes the idiosyncratic rules that governed this shoe exchange: "If a shoe causes you pain, you have to take part in the shoe exchange ceremony in the evening; this is where the individual's shodness is put to the test, because you have to be able to pick out a suitable shoe (not a pair, one) from the unseen collection at a glance. because a second exchange is no longer permitted once the choice has been made."

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¹⁴¹ Nümbg. doc. NI-6 190, Entress statement, April 14, 1947, p. 6.

¹⁴² Phlegmons are flat, purulent inflammations caused by staphylococci, particularly of the feet and lower legs.

¹⁴³ Levi, *Mensch*, p. 34.

Those who were lucky enough to find or exchange a cloth net could also try to make their shoes a little more wearable¹⁴⁴. However, this sock substitute soaked up dirt and mud on the first walk to the work site, which, together with the warmth of the feet, further increased the risk of infection. But the risk of getting "fat feet" was accepted by most of the workers in exchange for short-term relief.

In winter, the prisoner's suit could be exchanged for a slightly firmer suit; there were also underpants. If you belonged to an external detachment, you were lucky enough to get hold of a sweater or coat made of the same blue and white fabric. In the course of 1944, the increasing shortage of materials in the German Reich led to a shortage of striped prisoner clothing. As a substitute, the clothing chamber distributed shirts, pants and coats from the effects chambers in Auschwitz and Birkenau that could no longer be used elsewhere. In order to limit the risk of escape, they had the civilian clothes marked with a red line or a piece of cloth on the back. Approximately every six to eight weeks, the laundry disinfection department issued "new" clothing from prisoners who had been gassed in Birkenau. These were disinfected with steam and were probably no longer washed, at least from 1944 onwards¹⁴⁵. The prisoners themselves also rarely had the opportunity to clean their clothes. On the one hand, there was not enough soap, and on the other, this work would have required an unacceptable amount of time and energy for most of them under the camp conditions¹⁴⁶. The camp administration only approved exceptions for regular washing of prisoners' clothes for the few commandos who worked in the IG Farben offices with or alongside civilian employees.

At no time did the ordinary prisoners in Monowitz receive adequate clothing. The prisoners did not have adequate clothing that would have allowed them to live a humane existence. Within a very short space of time, the prisoners looked like utterly destroyed creatures due to the extended intervals between changes, initially arbitrarily by the SS and then due to the shortage of materials. The SS thus created the image of the concentration camp inmate that they had long held up to themselves and the German public. What made the situation worse for the prisoners than in many other concentration camps was the hard labor on the IG construction site. In the vast majority of cases, the site management did not provide the prisoners with the necessary protective clothing. Especially in the cold, continental winters (down to minus 30° Celsius), the lack of gloves and warm outer clothing took its toll: frostbite and pneumonia were the order of the day and sapped the last reserves of energy from the weakened prisoners. The camp rations did not contain nearly enough calories to compensate for their loss of strength.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Levi, *Mensch*, p. 81.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ Nuremberg doc. NI-4827, Treister testimony, 3.3. 1947, p. 2.

"But who could imagine not being hungry for once. The camp is hunger. We ourselves are the hunger, the living hunger."

Primo Levi ¹⁴⁷

Nutrition

In the first few weeks after the camp opened, the kitchen of the main Auschwitz camp delivered the food for the prisoners to Monowitz. The quantity and quality of the stew, which was made exclusively from the allotted rations, was roughly the same as what the prisoners received in the main camp. The kilometer-long transport is unlikely to have improved the watery soup, as the IG even confirmed the inedibility of the food in response to a complaint from a Reich German prisoner¹⁴⁸. If the rations were already far too low for the inmates of the main camp¹⁴⁹, they must have led to an extremely accelerated decline in strength among the Buna prisoners, who worked considerably harder in comparison. As a result, many of them collapsed dead or unconscious while working on the construction site. The high absenteeism rate of the prisoner work force, which had just been restarted, in no way met the expectations of the IG-Leitung. Since it saw the cause in the inferior rations provided by the SS, the IG had been preparing to supply the camp from its own resources since mid-December 1942. As had already been the case in 1941 with the planning of the prisoner deployment, Dürrfeld's negotiations with the SS offices in Berlin clarified the general requirements. The details were then laid down by the head of the IG-Wirtschaftsbetriebe, Reinhold, and the representative of KL Auschwitz, Burger. Two months later, in mid-February 1943, the changeover could take place¹⁵⁰. In view of the continuing typhus epidemic in the main camp, it was hoped that this would also eliminate one source of infection.

When the IG's commercial enterprises took over the rations, the prisoners deployed on the construction site also received "Buna or construction soup" in addition to their "normal" rations. According to Reinhold, this was a "ready-to-cook soup with a few onions or some other flavor". The nutritional value of this liquid, which today would probably be described as instant soup, was probably minimal given the supply difficulties with fat. IG employees who took a closer look at this soup broth described it as a "thin liquid with vegetable scraps" and sometimes "potato peelings and sawdust" floating in it¹⁵¹. Walther Dürrfeld tasted this "Buna soup" several times in front of the prisoners, who were probably mainly

¹⁴⁷ Levi, *Mensch*, p. 77.

¹⁴⁸ Nümbg. doc. NI-11862, Schuster's statement, 13.10.1947, p. 4. Heinrich Schuster's complaint did indeed lead to a change in the diet, but he was punished by the camp authorities with 75 strokes of the cane because of this complaint.

¹⁴⁹ An overview of the rations to which the prisoners were officially entitled can be found in the appendix, Table 5.

¹⁵⁰ Nümbg. doc. NI-9810, Reinhold statement, 19.8.1947, p. 7.

¹⁵¹ Nümbg. doc. NI-11642, Bayer statement, 25.9.1947, p. 3; also Nümbg. doc. NI-9812, statement Schild, 14.8.1947.

to ease his conscience. In any case, he could not persuade his driver to taste the unsightly broth. The exhausted prisoners, however, fought for every spoonful¹⁵², although excessive consumption could easily lead to diarrhea¹⁵³. The usual ration was three quarters of a liter, which the prisoners consumed from often rusty food bowls. Due to the prevailing shortage of materials, several people had to share one bowl - another source of disease transmission. No spoons were provided at all; each prisoner was therefore forced to buy a spoon made from scrap metal on the black market for half a bread ration¹⁵⁴.

The additional "soup" provided by the IG factory was initially prepared by the IG factory kitchens; after the kitchens in the Monowitz camp were expanded in the spring of 1943, it was cooked there in the morning and was available in thermos flasks on the construction site from ten o'clock¹⁵⁵. The prisoners received their main meal in their barracks after returning from the construction site and the evening roll call. A prisoner detachment under the leadership of "Küchenkapo Paul" was responsible for preparing the meals; it worked in an area separated from the rest of the camp by a wire fence, which also contained the service barracks with the supplies. There were 30 to 40 boilers in the kitchen, each with a capacity of around 300 liters; steam delivered by pipeline from the IG power plant served as heating energy.

The prisoners of the kitchen detachment processed the meagre rations exclusively to stew, "which was more or less liquid", as the head of the economic operations later stated¹⁵⁶. The preparation and cooking of the "pea mustard, sauerkraut and bean stew" took the whole day; from around 4 p.m., the kitchen prisoners then filled this main meal into thermos containers, which were collected from the issue point by the parlor staff or the block elders¹⁵⁷ after the evening roll call. Handles were attached to the large transport containers, which weighed around 30 kilograms, through which two poles could be pushed so that two people could lift them. The main ingredient of the stew and the food as a whole was potatoes, of which each prisoner was entitled to 30 kilograms per month¹⁵⁸. The block elders had the prerogative of distributing the food. They themselves and their helpers were always the last to help themselves: not out of politeness, but because the few nutritious ingredients were concentrated at the bottom of the pots.

¹⁵² Nuremberg doc. NI-98 14, Hausmann statement, June 24, 1947, p. 2.

¹⁵³ Nuremberg doc. NI-1 1 081, statement by Zlotolow, 2.9. 1 947, p. 1. In view of the many possibilities of contracting an illness in Monowitz, it is probably difficult to assign a clear cause.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Levi, Mensch, p. 89.

¹⁵⁵ APMO, Osw/Posener/ 14, p. 50, and Nuremberg Doc. NI-98 1 0, statement Reinhold, 19.8. 1 947, p. 10.

¹⁵⁶ On this and the following: Nümbg. doc. NI-98 10, Reinhold statement, August 19, 1947, p. 9- 1 2.

¹⁵⁷ Nuremberg Doc. NI-4828, Stern testimony, 1.3.1 947, p. 1.

¹⁵⁸ See the list of rations in the Appendix, Table 5.

Along with the evening meal of one liter of stew, the block elder's assistants also distributed a so-called cold ration, which was intended as breakfast¹⁵⁹. However, among the hungry prisoners who were exhausted from work, there were only a few who were disciplined enough not to eat it in the evening. Moreover, most of them were afraid that fellow prisoners might steal their rations by the next morning. This "breakfast" consisted of a fifth of a loaf of bread and about twenty grams of margarine. Once a week there was about 30 grams of sausage made from inferior "D-class or horse meat", as well as 100 grams of quark. In addition, a total of 50 grams of marmelade

and two additional sausage rations were issued to those working in the sub-commandos¹⁶⁰. The prisoners were not given sugar, milk or cheese, nor drinking water, although the tap water in the area around Auschwitz was undrinkable¹⁶¹.

The IG's kitchen inspector, Wurziger, checked that the quantities were allocated correctly; he spent one to two hours a day in the Monowitz kitchen and also monitored the consumption of materials there. Apart from bread and meat, which were delivered daily, the kitchen received weekly allocations. The "kitchen sergeant" Baierdorf and the kitchen Kapo collected the foodstuffs from the IG Auschwitz business premises and brought them to the business barracks in Monowitz, which were guarded by the SS. Despite close monitoring of the supplies, however, there was constant "food embezzlement", which further reduced the already low rations¹⁶². Prisoner functionaries and corrupt members of the SS enriched themselves for their own benefit and that of their friends at the expense of the other prisoners. The food stolen from the economic barracks usually ended up in the possession of prisoner functionaries, who obtained alcohol etc. from the main camp or from outside¹⁶³. The representatives of the IG were just as aware of these abuses as the SS. The latter considered it essential to specifically point out the need for everyone to receive their full ration in their special order to increase labor economy at the beginning of 1944¹⁶⁴. Admittedly, nothing changed in terms of the rations afterwards.

The ordinary prisoners silently accepted the theft of food on a grand scale. They had no opportunity to intervene, because the "Organizing" in the storage barracks was mostly done with the approval of the "inmates".

¹⁵⁹ Levi reports on the morning distribution of bread. It is possible that the camp rules had changed by the time he arrived in March 1944, or that it was at the discretion of the respective block elder when he handed out the rations; see Levi, *Mensch*, p. 51.

¹⁶⁰ *APMO*, Osw/Posener/14, p. 50 f.

¹⁶¹ According to tests carried out by SS doctors, the water contained nitrogen derivatives that indicated decomposition processes. The tests were probably carried out at the Bacteriological Institute of the Waffen SS in Birkenau. Typhus pathogens were also found in the water there. Nuremberg doc. NI-4830, Vitek testimony, 3.3. 1947, p. 5. Likewise Nuremberg Doc. NI-1 4287, statement by Rossbach, Jan. 21, 1948, and Nuremberg Doc.

NI-4191, statement Hess, 23. 1. 1947, p. 1.

¹⁶² Nümbg. doc. NI-98 10, Reinhold statement, 19.8. 1947, p. 11.

¹⁶³ *APMO*, Osw/Posener/ 14, p. 20.

¹⁶⁴ Nuremberg Doc. NI- 15 201, special order of KL Auschwitz, Feb. 14, 1944.

self-administration". What was diverted from the regular rations contributed to bartering within the camp. Only as long as enough food reached the black market could the "camp VIPs" maintain their higher standard of living. It was also widespread for block elders to retain part of the rations. They used this to pay for fat and other goods that were needed in the block or for their personal welfare but were not allocated by the camp administration. Bread was therefore a kind of substitute currency in the camp. Under the specific laws of the restricted market in Monowitz, the theft of provisions can thus be described as a kind of compulsory tax on the general food rations, which served to ensure a sufficient circulation of goods and money.

After being handed out to the hungry prisoners, however, bread acquired an almost sacrosanct status. If a prisoner tried to steal a piece of bread from his sleeping or half-dead comrade, he lost his right to live in the eyes of the prisoner community. Under the extreme living conditions of the concentration camp, where a piece of bread was the symbol of survival, such an act was considered murder. If the thief was able to help himself, he was allowed to kill the thief according to the unwritten laws of the camp; if he was too weak to do so, executioners were found to do "justice" in his place.¹⁶⁵

The IG only succeeded in improving the quality of the rations at the very beginning.¹⁶⁶ Although the kitchen in Monowitz had been equipped with state-of-the-art equipment since its completion¹⁶⁷, the rations allocated remained at the same low level as in the main camp. Once the new supply routes and the people responsible for them were known, the laws of redistribution in the concentration camp were probably re-established after just a few weeks. As before the changeover, prisoner functionaries and supervisory staff enriched themselves with the already limited supplies. What was left over for an "ordinary" prisoner could not guarantee his survival in view of the workload.

The information on the amount of daily rations varies considerably between around 800¹⁶⁸ and 1,500 to 1,600 calories.¹⁶⁹ In view of the workload, this meant extreme malnutrition. According to the calculations of a doctor who was himself imprisoned in Monowitz, the prisoners in the heavy commandos probably consumed around 1,100 to 1,200 calories per day from their body reserves. This led to an average weight loss of two to four kilograms per week. Even a prisoner who was still strong on arrival

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Langbein, *Menschen*, p. 160 f.

¹⁶⁶ Nuremberg Doc. NI-4829, statement by Tauber, March 3, 1947, p. 1.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Wohl, *Arbeit*, p. 70.

¹⁶⁸ Nuremberg doc. NI-1652, statement by Loebner, June 16, 1947, who was a prisoner doctor in the Janina pit. According to his calculations, the calorie requirement of a worker there was probably around 2,500 calories.

¹⁶⁹ For example, Nuremberg doc. NI-14723, 19.8. 1947, statement by Braus, statement by his interlocutor, p. 1.

A man could only endure such emaciation for about three months ¹⁷⁰. With such malnutrition, it was a question of survival in which work detachment a prisoner worked.

The example of a Jewish prisoner from Norway can illustrate how quickly these inhumane living conditions in Monowitz could wipe out a family ¹⁷¹. On December 2, 1942, Kai Feinberg arrived in Auschwitz with a transport from the Norwegian concentration camp Berg. After unloading the women, children, old people and all their luggage, the men who were fit for work were disinfected and registered. They then had to march four to five hours to the Buna plant, where they were deloused once again. In order to minimize the risk of introducing epidemics, Feinberg, his two brothers and his father were placed in the quarantine detachment. There they had to work like the other prisoners, but were not allowed to make contact with their fellow sufferers either during or after work. After three weeks, they were finally admitted to block six of the Monowitz camp, which at that time housed around 300 people in three-storey beds.

As was customary in the camp, the labor department assigned them to a "heavy" detachment as new arrivals. There they had to unload cement, iron bars and heavy ovens from wagons. Their first working day was December 24, 1942. Presumably out of perfidious cynicism to celebrate Yule, the SS made the prisoners work through until three o'clock the next morning without any food. The hard work with no opportunity for rest initially exhausted Feinberg's father in particular. The weaker he became, the more the guards made him a victim of their maltreatment. Only 46 years old, Elias Feinberg died on January 7, 1943 as a result of exhaustion and beatings. Within the next two weeks, Kai Feinberg's two brothers also died. He himself fell ill with pneumonia in mid-January and spent some time in the infirmary. Only from the

On February 15, he returned to work as normal. After just two weeks, however, he was declared "unfit for work" due to his foot problems, which is why he was to be transferred to Birkenau. Feinberg had a rare stroke of luck: on this day, no truck came from Birkenau to collect the selected prisoners. He was taken back to the main camp, where he remained until the evacuation.

Leisure, culture, religious and political communities

In Monowitz, the "ordinary" prisoners had very little time at their disposal. Every second Sunday was officially work-free, but only if there were no disciplinary reasons to the contrary, which happened quite often. The large "masses" of exhausted and hungry prisoners spent these days, as well as the few free hours on working days, primarily seeking rest from

¹⁷⁰ Nümbg. doc. NI-4830, Vitek statement, 3.3. 1947, p. 5.

¹⁷¹ Nümbg. doc. NI-4822, Feinberg statement, 13.3. 1947, p. 1 ff.

their exertions. Kapos, block elders, commandants and other privileged prisoners, on the other hand, had the strength to deal with other things as well ¹⁷².

There had been a music band in the camp since the summer of 1943. Its official purpose was to accompany the daily marching out and marching in of the labor detachments with marching music¹⁷³. It must have been one of the most unusual marching bands, as it was largely made up of "very well-known soloists from the most diverse orchestras in the European world" ¹⁷⁴. The quality and occasion of their musical performances were thus in stark contrast to each other. Only on special occasions were the Jewish musicians, to whom the SS granted the status of lower functionary prisoners ¹⁷⁵, able to show off their real skills, usually on Sunday afternoons to entertain the camp SS. On work-free Sunday afternoons, theater and music events were sometimes held, to which not only the SS but also prominent prisoners were invited. The "ordinary" prisoners were excluded from these events not only for reasons of space; the "better circles" of camp society did not tolerate sickly and dirty prisoners at their entertainments. However, their poor physical condition probably only made a few of them want to visit the camp. have been raised.

The comparatively good living conditions of the privileged prisoners, on the other hand, even allowed sporting events to be organized. Soccer matches between German and Polish camp inmates took place almost regularly, also on work-free Sundays. While active participation was of course only possible for a few well-fed "celebrities" due to the camp conditions, the majority of inmates followed the matches played on the roll call square. The SS also showed great interest in boxing matches in Monowitz, which were also organized on the roll call square in summer and in certain blocks in winter. In this sport, the IG camp had a former world champion and several national champions, which ensured that the fights attracted a great deal of attention ¹⁷⁶.

In addition to these events authorized by the SS, prisoners also met in smaller groups for illegal events. On Jewish holidays, they held inconspicuous religious services in many blocks and, on other occasions, training sessions for young Zionists. Even in the camp bunker, where prisoners awaited their interrogation and usually their murder, it was possible, with the help of the The "bunker factor" celebrated religious festivals. On the birthdays of high-ranking camp functionaries, the camp promenade sometimes organized festivities that a "simple" prisoner would probably have thought were a hallucination. Because there

¹⁷² It is not clear why Pingel, *Häftlinge*, p. 166, also includes visits to brothels under the heading "cultural activities".

¹⁷³ Cf. Wohl, *Arbeit*, p. 37.

¹⁷⁴ On the following APMO, Osw/Posener/14, p. 54 f. According to Posener, most of the Jewish musicians were members of the symphony orchestras in Paris, Brussels, Vienna, Berlin, Warsaw and other European capitals. He does not mention any names.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. Pingel, *Häftlinge*, p. 168.

¹⁷⁶ Cf. also Langbein, *Menschen*, p. 155.

The other prisoner functionaries had to give him gifts in order to secure the jubilee's favor. These were usually gifts in kind, which they had organized from the storage barracks or from outside the camp. This meant that only "prominent" prisoners were able to take part in these diversions from everyday life in the camp. Prisoner reports give the impression that such events were not only for entertainment, but also to stage the subtle hierarchical differences that existed in the camp ¹⁷⁷. However, the "ordinary" prisoners were completely excluded from this demonstration of power.

The members of the political resistance organizations usually gathered for their conspiratorial meetings in the infirmary or in the writing room, while sports or musical performances took place in the camp. The aim of such meetings was not, however, to better understand the events in Monowitz, as Amery assumes¹⁷⁸. His view that the prisoners were concerned with interpreting the events of the camp in a wider historical context fails to recognize the possibilities of intellectual discourse under the conditions of the concentration camp. Very few of them could allow their thoughts to revolve around anything other than their own survival. Religiosity, which can give many people the strength to survive in difficult situations, was also a disadvantage in Monowitz, as in other camps: Strictly pious prisoners who closed themselves off from the factual horrors of reality and either sought meaning in this suffering or ultimately focused their hopes on otherworldly redemption usually perished mercilessly here. The groups that had been able to create a real basis for their existence in Monowitz, on the other hand, only used the common convictions they had brought with them as a basis: conspiracy techniques developed in the time before the camp, the experience of working in a clearly hierarchical organization and the certainty of a compatible world view made communication and coordinated action in the camp much easier¹⁷⁹. Meetings were therefore held primarily to strengthen the sense of togetherness and to plan actions to ensure survival. In order to protect the existence of the organization as a whole, only those directly involved generally took part. The communists in particular followed the principle that the less the individual knew, the less he could reveal to the SS under torture.

The original ideological attitudes therefore faded into the background in everyday camp life. The organizational skills associated with them, on the other hand, played a significant role in the existential threat situation. In contrast to political beliefs, religious interpretations of the world offered the prisoners no comparable help in surviving. This applied to Monowitz to a much greater extent than in other camps, as there were only a few followers of non-Jewish faiths here.

¹⁷⁷ On the self-image of some "green" prisoner functionaries, see the remarks of former prisoner Waitz in Langbein, *Menschen*, p. 171.

¹⁷⁸ Cf. Amery, *Schuld*, p. 25.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. Pingel, *Häftlinge*, p. 171 ff.

There were also groups of prisoners who were not allowed to form a community due to their small numbers¹⁸⁰. Only as a member of a larger group of prisoners who had acquired a certain influence in the camp was it possible to significantly increase one's own chances of survival. An individual's adherence to Christian values such as charity, which required them to share their own bread ration with someone in need, may have honored the individual, but it worsened their life prospects enormously.

Their denominational homogeneity did not help the Jews in any way, although they were by far the largest group of prisoners in terms of numbers. Although they could gather in secret for church services and other religious celebrations, it was not possible for them to gain the same advantages as the "Reds", for example. Jewish prisoners were not able to climb up the camp hierarchy at all in the early days, and only to a comparatively limited extent later on. As in the other Nazi concentration camps, Jews in Monowitz were subjected to the strongest extermination pressure by the SS precisely because of their origins. As will be shown later, the economic demands of the IG factory on their ability to work only changed this during certain phases and to a limited extent. Since a Jewish human life had no value in the Buna camp either, everyone had to be anxious to live to see the next day. Under these conditions, however, it was impossible for the largest group of prisoners in Monowitz to formulate or even assert their common interests. The national and cultural diversity among the Jewish prisoners may also have contributed to this.

Despite their quantitative strength, the Jews in Monowitz could therefore only try to find spiritual support in their faith, either individually or in small groups, in order to survive the agony of the camp. However, strict adherence to the Jewish rules of conduct, which forbade the individual to adapt to the current circumstances, only accelerated the process of extermination that the SS were already striving for. The living conditions in the concentration camp and the hard work on the IG construction site were so physically draining that for most of them it was a matter of bare survival. Religious convictions could generally do little to increase physical resistance. The communist and national Polish groups in the camp, on the other hand, were much more successful in developing strategies that enabled them to survive under the conditions of the concentration camp¹⁸¹.

Survival routes

The deportees knew nothing of all this when they arrived in Monowitz on a new transport. This camp world with its screaming, the neglected

¹⁸⁰ In Monowitz, an organization of Catholic Poles would most likely have been possible due to their consistently high numbers. However, there is no indication in the sources of a religiously motivated group. The common political conviction clearly dominated within the national Polish resistance group.

¹⁸¹ Cf. chapter IV.6.

The new arrivals were confronted with looming figures, dirt and death that seemed more threatening than their worst fears. Even though they barely understood the procedures and rules of the camp, the almost exclusively Jewish new arrivals quickly realized that they didn't count for much here. Their high prisoner numbers made it easy for everyone to identify them. This made them preferred objects for the

Games" and scams by the established prisoners. In everyday life in the camp, the "high numbers" were considered "chubby, docile and stupid": they allowed themselves to be sold a spoon for six times the black market price or to be forced into a brutal capo

just because they were told he would assign them to a particularly light command¹⁸². During the initial period, a prisoner was therefore usually unprotected against the sarcasm and harshness of the "old prisoners". Depending on their ability to adapt and their life experience, this phase could last for different lengths of time. Those who did not manage to internalize the essential rules of camp life within a few days, or at most weeks¹⁸³, ended up in Birkenau. Adapting to the camp conditions was not easy, as the order that applied here contradicted all known laws of civilized societies. And even those who managed to behave according to the rules were not safe from being gassed.

The prisoners' chances of survival in Monowitz were also largely predetermined by their position within the National Socialist racial and national hierarchy. Those of German nationality were given a function within the prisoners' self-administration more or less without any action on their part. Their survival was thus relatively secure, even without belonging to one of the influential groups, provided they did nothing out of the ordinary. For practically all the other camp inmates, on the other hand, it was a vital necessity to improve their livelihood through their own efforts. Only very few were lucky enough to find a friend or acquaintance in their block or commando who helped them to find their way around the camp. Some were able to buy such support for a high price: "Prominent" prisoners often chose a young, good-looking newcomer as their favorite; sexual compliance could then grant him protection from abuse and hard work, but also secure better rations¹⁸⁴.

Unscrupulousness and selfishness paid off under the camp conditions almost in the always. Anyone who drove their comrades on, complained about their laziness and showed no compassion had a good chance of being given a command and being promoted.

¹⁸² Cf. Levi, *Mensch*, p. 27.

¹⁸³ According to Langbein, *Menschen*, p. 46 f., the first weeks and months were also "the worst". His statistical data for the mortality rate in Auschwitz probably also applied approximately to Monowitz, probably with an even faster onset of mortality. According to this, the death rate initially rose "slowly" from 3.06 in the first to 5.32 in the second and to 6.2 percent in the third week after the arrival of a new transport. After that, the death rate literally exploded: in each of the following four weeks, more than 10 percent of the prisoners died, while the rate then slowly fell. After the twelfth week, the death rate had fallen to around 2 percent.

¹⁸⁴ However, this did not apply in every case, as Frister, *Mütze*, p. 297 ff. reports. If a boy was no longer attractive or knew too much, there were many ways for a functional prisoner to "get rid of him".

to move up the camp hierarchy. The code of conduct of civil society was usually a hindrance. Intellectual abilities were of no help to the individual, as it was impossible to understand or foresee what was going on around them. In the arbitrary camp world, even mentally retarded people could therefore live in comparatively good conditions, as Primo Levi reports¹⁸⁵. Sheer muscular strength, physical resistance and an animal instinct for survival were more likely to ensure an individual's survival under the extreme stresses of camp life than intelligence and education. In view of the depressing reality of camp life, the limited connection to reality of such people probably had an additional positive effect on their chances of survival.

Only a few, on the other hand, managed to survive the hardships of everyday life in the camp by demonstratively maintaining the behaviour they had brought with them from civilization against all odds. With an extraordinary effort of will, however, it was also possible to attract attention in this way: Those who took extreme care of their appearance, even organizing soap so that they could wash their shirts between general changes, stood out from the crowd. Not disappearing into the crowd, not completely losing one's identity, sometimes offered the chance to live on, because it might catch the attention of a Kapo¹⁸⁶.

Another way of securing their livelihood was to trade in coveted goods. Officially, all bartering was forbidden in the camp. But even to comply with the camp rules, goods smuggled in from outside were needed: Every morning, the prisoners had to grease and polish their shoes¹⁸⁷, although no shoe polish or other grease was allocated to the blocks. The block elder therefore had to organize it from outside the camp. Prisoners who had the opportunity to steal lubricants, machine oil or another greasy and dark substance at their workplace often smuggled small quantities into the camp in their lunch boxes. A block elder whose supplies were running low was therefore happy to pay a corresponding reward in the form of bread or soup¹⁸⁸. In addition to such bilateral relationships, there was also a regular market that formed daily in the north-west corner of the camp after the return of the labor detachments. In summer, a wide variety of goods were offered for sale in the open air, in winter in a washing hut. They came either from kitchen or warehouse thefts, from scams or from the storerooms of the Buna factory. The IG factory was therefore just as important a source of scarce goods for Monowitz as the "Canada" barracks were for the Auschwitz camp¹⁸⁹.

¹⁸⁵ Cf. Levi, *Mensch*, p. 99 f.

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Levi, *Mensch*, p. 97 f.

¹⁸⁷ The purpose of greasing clogs is not reported. It may have served to protect them from moisture; see Levi, *Mensch*, p. 148.

¹⁸⁸ Cf. Levi, *Mensch*, p. 87 f.

¹⁸⁹ Cf. Langbein, *Menschen*, p. 158 ff.

In addition to these "professional" traders, there were also some prisoners whose hunger drove them to trade the half of their own bread ration they had saved up for something supposedly better, with no prospect of success. Some of them pawned their "last shirt" in the true sense of the word, which they would only be able to sell the next time they washed.

and replaced after a few blows from their Kapo. They also traded in "mahorca", a simple tobacco that could be bought in the canteen in the Reichsdeutsche block for premium coupons¹⁹⁰. The premium coupons themselves became a kind of money substitute, the value of which depended directly on the availability of the tobacco or the attractiveness of a newly arrived group of bordello girls. For non-Jewish prisoners, a premium ticket could pay for a visit to the camp brothel¹⁹¹. However, a trader made the most profit when he sold his goods to civilians in the Buna factory. Shirts and dental gold that had been extracted from a - living - prisoner were particularly sought after. However, the higher proceeds were also offset by a high risk, which

could cost the prisoner his life. Because while the SS were able to stop the thefts The authorities tacitly tolerated the "export" of goods from the camp, not least because they profited from it themselves, punished the "export" of goods from the camp as theft of camp property¹⁹². The claim to ownership apparently also extended to the tooth gold of the prisoners still alive.

British prisoners of war were popular trading partners, with whom prisoners could occasionally make contact during working hours. Thanks to the Red Cross food parcels, they were comparatively well supplied with food and other everyday necessities. As they were also imprisoned, they obviously showed more understanding for the needs of the concentration camp inmates than the civilian workers - and were correspondingly liberal. They sometimes even gave small gifts to the prisoners, although this could end tragically, as one English prisoner of war reported: "One of our boys threw a cigarette to a Jew who was loading pipes. He climbed down to pick up the cigarette and seriously injured his leg. He didn't seem so much hurt as scared when he said: , I guess this is the end. This means the gas chamber for me. After this prisoner returned to the camp that evening, he disappeared and was never seen by us in the factory again."¹⁹³

With a bit of luck, however, it was possible to organize additional food from the British and other forced laborers who received food shipments from outside. nize. They were often left with the "Buna soup" if they had something better themselves¹⁹⁴. Some commandos even hired a prisoner who was talented at this kind of organization. In return, this prisoner received a particularly large

¹⁹⁰ For the acquisition of premium coupons, see Chapter V. I.

¹⁹¹ Cf. Levi, *Mensch*, p. 84.

¹⁹² Cf. Langbein, *Menschen*, p. 168.

¹⁹³ Nümbg. doc. NI- 11 695, statement by Dales, 17.7. 1947, p. 3.

¹⁹⁴ Nümbg. doc. NI- 11 693, Ferris statement, October 23, 1947, p. 4.

Portion and a temporary release from the actual work of the commander ¹⁹⁵. However, this was only possible if the respective Kapo also had an interest in better care for "his" people.

Anyone who managed to smuggle something into the camp was well on the way to improving his situation, because he had something that others wanted. If he was able to bring items needed in the camp into the camp circuit with a certain regularity, this gave him a certain amount of influence, as he could exchange his goods for other forms of preferential treatment: Machine grease for extra supplies, alcohol for better accommodation or a better command or functional post. The basis of this trade was therefore theft from the camp and factory gazettes on the one hand and, for example, preferential consideration when filling camp positions on the other. As most of the prisoners came to Monowitz via the main camp, the valuables that the deportees brought with them played only a minor role, in contrast to the main camp and Birkenau.

However, anyone who did not know how to organize additional food or barter, or who did not manage to climb up the camp hierarchy in other ways, ran the risk of becoming a "Muselmann"¹⁹⁶. This state of complete exhaustion was the fate of the majority of prisoners sent to Monowitz. Such an advanced decline in strength clearly demonstrated to the outside world that the individual, hidden in an apathetic body that barely reacted to its environment, had been unable to adapt to the rules of camp life. Anyone who had reached this stage had practically no chance of survival under the conditions of the camp.

Everyone in the camp, including his fellow prisoners, saw a "Muselmann" as a burden: the IG was no longer interested in such exhausted prisoners, who were in fact now unfit for work. In order to get rid of them and increase the work productivity of the commandos, it urged the SS to carry out selections. As long as the "Muselmänner" were still working on the construction site, no other prisoner wanted to be assigned with them. Their lack of fitness meant a double burden for their somewhat stronger comrades, as the workload had to be completed in any case. Even in the prisoner infirmary, staff and patients saw the "Muselmänner" as a burden. On the one hand, there were no treatment options for them anyway, and on the other, many were happy to have their bed to themselves for a few nights in the overcrowded barracks ¹⁹⁷. The SS men ultimately interpreted the slow reactions of the "Muselmänner" as passive resistance or laziness, which encouraged them to inflict even more brutal beatings at every opportunity.

The ruthless work on the IG construction site and the miserable living conditions in the camp resulted in an average of around four fifths of all

¹⁹⁵ Cf. Levi, *Mensch*, p. 78 f.

¹⁹⁶ A detailed description of the physical and psychological symptoms was provided by the former inmate doctor Fejkiel. His explanations are most easily accessible in Langbein, *Menschen*, pp. 114 f.

¹⁹⁷ Nümbg. doc. NI-5847, statement Epstein, 3.3. 1947, p. 3; StA Frankfurt a.M., judgment in the criminal case 4 Ks 1/67, 14.6. 1968, p. 31 f.; Levi, *Mensch*, p. 92 f.

prisoners more or less quickly led to such exhaustion. In Monowitz, more than in other concentration camps, the "Muselmann" was the inevitable consequence of the cooperation between the SS and the IG: the "exhaustive" labor deployment sought by the SS leadership and the construction management's insistence on maximum productivity coincided here. The result was the physical extermination of the vast majority of the Jewish camp inmates. Only those who were placed in a "light" work detachment were able to escape this fate.

4. The labor detachments in Monowitz

The Monowitz camp was set up in order to be able to deploy the prisoners as effectively and flexibly as possible on the IG's construction site. In accordance with this purpose, work characterized life in the camp. Not only did it take up by far the largest part of each day, it also had a direct influence on the prisoners' respective living conditions. The type of work assigned to them was decisive for their chances of surviving for a longer period in the "Buna camp". The SS paid more attention here than in other concentration camps to ensuring that the entire workforce was potentially productive. With the exception of the prisoners of conscription and the sick, the "Arbeitseinsatz" department therefore grouped all camp inmates into work detachments, which had to carry out work on the construction site of the Buna plant or in the camp. However, the "character" of these work detachments varied widely: the spectrum ranged from the camp's internal writing detachment with comparatively good working conditions, to skilled labor detachments with still tolerable working conditions, to mining detachments with a life expectancy of only a few weeks. Whether a work detachment worked directly for the IG-Bauleitung or for another private company commissioned by it apparently made no difference; the IG specified the work quotas and working hours centrally for all work detachments and monitored compliance with them¹⁹⁸.

For the individual prisoner, belonging to a particular commando must have appeared to be a circumstance of quasi-fatal significance. For new arrivals in particular, it was initially difficult to assess whether they were in a "good" or a "bad" unit.

bad" commando. After a few days or weeks, some of them developed a feeling for the "bad" commando from contact with other prisoners.

"quality" of their own work. This was ultimately linked to the desire to stay with the camp or to transfer to a supposedly better commando. However, by no means all camp inmates understood the direct connection between the work detachment and the prospect of survival. Many of them initially hoped to secure their existence by working diligently and completing the prescribed workload. This trapped the prisoners in a vicious circle: They were indeed forced to put in a certain amount of work in order to live to see the next day; at the same time, however, each energy-sapping shift brought them a little closer to a state of complete exhaustion. When they realized that no economic laws prevailed in Monowitz, that the working conditions were not in accordance with the law, and that the work

¹⁹⁸ Nuremberg doc. NI- 1 0824, Kohn testimony, 29.5 .1 947, p. 3.

The fact that the prisoners' work performance was not usually maintained, as there were enough replacements, was often already too late.

If a prisoner realized in time that his current command would cost him his last reserves of strength within a few weeks, he could initially hope that his command might be downsized or split up for technical reasons. There was almost always an opportunity to change in such cases. Most often, however, a prisoner ended up in a different commando by receiving help from "outside": Anyone who stood out positively to the SS or possessed a skill that the IG was currently looking for could become a Kapo or work as a skilled worker under much better working conditions. Good contacts with people in the prisoners' self-administration were also very useful when trying to obtain a transfer to another job.

As in other areas of camp life, the position of the camp's The "quality" of a prisoner's work within the camp hierarchy had a direct impact on the "quality" of his work. A German from the Reich, but also a Pole or Czech, would hardly have had any difficulty being sponsored by a fellow countryman. For the vast majority of Jewish prisoners, however, the only hope was to make "connections" by chance, for example because they came from the same town as the block elder or because they stood out due to their unusual dialect. One way of helping chance along was, as already mentioned, to be able to offer something on the barter market.

The size of the labor detachments varied greatly. They could range from a few prisoners fetching food or laundry from the neighboring communities to several hundred¹⁹⁹ who were deployed in the large construction kommandos on the factory premises. However, the WVHA endeavored to avoid prisoner detachments that were too small, as they were said to contain "little or no work"²⁰⁰. The more personal contact between SS guards and prisoners probably led to the prisoners being driven less rigorously and hardly mistreated – contrary to the intentions of the SS leadership. In the larger commandos, on the other hand, an atmosphere of anonymity prevailed in which the SS guards were not embarrassed to experience the prisoners under their supervision as individuals. From 1943 onwards, this became even more pronounced, as the SS guards only secured the outside of the work area due to a lack of personnel. From this point onwards, direct control over the prisoners lay almost exclusively with the prisoner functionaries²⁰¹. Around ten workers at a time, sometimes also a few skilled workers, were under the control of a foreman. Several such groups of prisoners then formed a kommando, which was led by a Kapo. Their usual size was between 50 and 100 prisoners²⁰². In exceptional cases, such as the so-called Kabelkorn

¹⁹⁹ Nuremberg Doc. NI-1105 1, Wagner testimony, Sept. 3, 1947.

²⁰⁰ ItZ, Fa-506/12, Circular **WVHA-D**, 8.12. 1943.

²⁰¹ To the following: Nuremberg Doc. NI-12204, Wagenaar testimony, 27.10.1947.

²⁰² Wagenaar speaks of "mostly 100 prisoners" per Kapo, the IG engineer Karl Bayer, Nürnberg. doc. NI- 11642, 25.9.1947, gives the figure of 50.

In the first mando, a few hundred prisoners once worked together; then the SS appointed a head Kapo who commanded a few Kapos.

The Kapo was told what work was to be done by a civilian foreman from IG or one of its contracted companies. The Kapos passed these instructions on to the prisoners via the foremen. The Kapo was personally responsible for fulfilling the work quota: "If this workload was not fulfilled, the the I.G. foreman reported the Kapo to the SS and the Kapo was punished in the Monowitz concentration camp (usually a beating)."²⁰³ This statement by a former IG engineer makes it clear that the German civilian workers were aware of the consequences of their actions. The majority of the Kapos felt that such direct liability drove them to take ruthless measures to ensure that the prisoner workers fulfilled the work quota assigned to them. As a result, the latter became victims of verbal abuse and often also corporal punishment, especially from the Kapos. If the latter were repeatedly unable to meet the demands placed on them, they were threatened with the withdrawal of their privileges. If a Kapo had mistreated his subordinates particularly brutally, i.e. if he had committed treason in the eyes of his fellow prisoners by working as an assistant for the SS, then he had to fear such a demotion. Conversely, the fear of imminent lynch law could increase the willingness of the Kapos to use violence ruthlessly to fulfill the required workload. The enormous number of deaths on the construction site in the initial phase of prisoner deployment can be explained, at least in part, by such reactions.

In addition to this mistreatment at the workplace, the Kapo could also report a prisoner to the IG-Meister or the SS for alleged or actual underperformance. This resulted in punishment in the camp, usually in the form of up to 25 strokes of the cane. Attempts by the WVHA to punish the less lei

The attempts to use corporal punishment only as a last resort had little success²⁰⁴. Compared to dark detention, food deprivation and hard labor, beatings had the advantage for the SS men that this form of punishment could be carried out quickly and without great bureaucratic effort. In addition, there was certainly a desire on the part of some overseers to give free rein to their long indoctrinated and then possibly perceived aversion to the "Untermenschen". Even those who were not originally ardent anti-Semites were tempted by peer pressure to mistreat them. Punishment campaigns against the prisoners also offered a welcome opportunity to once again cultivate the self-confidence as a member of the superior "master race", which was not exactly encouraged by living in cramped accommodation without much opportunity for development. In individual cases, however, the sanctioned beating of prisoners certainly also served as an outlet for sadistic tendencies. As the economic importance of the inmates increased, arbitrary mistreatment by SS men without cause for punishment was officially tolerated less and less, even if the camp administration only rarely intervened.

²⁰³ Nuremberg doc. NI- ! 1 642, Bayer statement, 25.9. 1 947, p. 2.

²⁰⁴ ItZ. Fa- ! 83/1, p. 209 f. WVHA-D to KL, 2. 12. 1 942.

Allocation to the commands

In exceptional cases, prisoners with specialized training had a certain amount of influence over which commando they were assigned to when they arrived at the camp. This was possible if, at the time of their arrival, the IG-Bauleitung was setting up a new commando that was dependent on skilled workers. Construction workers, craftsmen, and later also chemists and electrical engineers were highly sought-after specialists for the company. However, some prisoners only pretended to have certain qualifications and hoped not to be tested. In the majority of cases, such daring paid off and probably saved the lives of some. Once you had made it into a specialist unit, you had a good chance of staying there with the help of your comrades. A practical or theoretical examination of the respective skills was probably not carried out until 1944²⁰⁵, when IG employees also came directly to the camp to look for qualified workers.

As a rule, the selection of the labor detachments was not so systematic, as the former Jewish Monowitz prisoner Lion Wagenaar, a lawyer from the Netherlands, reports. According to Wagenaar, who was imprisoned in The Hague for aiding escapes, the new prisoners were

"at the end of the quarantine period on the roll call square in Monowitz, without being asked about their occupation, age, work, etc."²⁰⁶. The "Labor Deployment" department was responsible for assembling the work detachments. Under the direction of SS-Unterrführer Stolten, some prisoners worked there relatively independently. From Christmas 1942, Ervin Schulhof, who was transferred from Buchenwald to Monowitz with the first transport, was responsible for planning the labor detachments²⁰⁷. Although the Pilsen-born inmate was not a communist, his position meant that he was in close contact with the camp's communist resistance group, which sought to use him to influence the allocation of commandos²⁰⁸. As the head of this group, Stefan Heymann provided Schulhof with lists of prisoner names for this purpose, which were to be assigned to a lighter commando when they were released from the prisoner infirmary, for example.

New arrivals, who did not yet have any contacts in the camp, were generally "only used for the heaviest and most strenuous work", as former Buna inmate Norbert Wollheim reported²⁰⁹. This was "standard practice" in Monowitz and - according to the available sources - was not questioned by any of the inmates. This procedure bears traits of

²⁰⁵ Cf. Levi, Mensch, p. 106 ff.

²⁰⁶ Nümbg. doc. NI- 12204, statement by Lion Wagenaar, 27. 10.1947, p. 2.

²⁰⁷ It also happened that prisoners tried to transfer to another commando on their own authority. However, this could only succeed if the Kapo in charge played along. Tibor Wohl reports on a failed attempt to move to a lighter commando together with a comrade; see Wohl, Arbeit, p. 48.

²⁰⁸ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 1043 ff., and Nümbg. doc. NI-7967, statements Schulhof, 21 .6. 1947.

²⁰⁹ Nuremberg Doc. NI-9807, Wollheim testimony, June 3, 1947, p. 2.

of an initiation rite of the camp community, for which motives can only be assumed, as no statements are available on this sensitive subject. However, there is some evidence to support the following assumption: "Older" prisoners tried to avoid brutal and exhausting commandos out of a well-founded interest in survival. In the case of newly arrived transports, they assumed that those who had been deported only a few days previously were still well fed and in better physical condition than the camp inmates, without of course knowing the circumstances of the transport; accordingly, the new arrivals would also be in a better position to survive deployment in the "hard" commandos. Apart from that, some of the experienced prisoners may also have thought that in Monowitz only those who survived a few weeks in such a commando had a chance of survival anyway.

Under the conditions of camp life, these were in any case sufficient arguments for not making oneself guilty in accordance with the prisoner society's code of conduct, even though many prisoners were sent to their deaths by being assigned to particularly draining commandos, also known in camp jargon as "murder squads". Here - as with almost all such decision-making processes within the camp - the "old" prisoners had to be aware that it was a "zero-sum game": for every person who was deliberately not assigned to such a life-threatening commando, another had to suffer. As the size of the work detachments was determined by the IG, there could be no help for one prisoner without simultaneous harm for another.

It can hardly be held against the prisoners who had survived longer in the camp that they initially thought of their own survival. Nevertheless, their behavior was not unproblematic from an ethical point of view: prisoners newly arrived in Monowitz may indeed often have been in better physical condition than "old" prisoners, but they were also the most inexperienced. For these "novices" to camp life, this meant that their death rate in "hard" commandos was significantly higher than that of experienced prisoners. They could not yet know what behavior would best ensure their survival: whether the greatest possible effort would be worthwhile or would only mean premature exhaustion; how to appear industrious without exhausting themselves; where to get extra food and how to transfer to another commando. Thus, the first weeks in Monowitz were a rigorous selection process for all newly assigned prisoners, which punished non-adaptability to the camp conditions with death within a very short time.

The field commands

In addition to the factors already mentioned, the time at which a prisoner arrived at the camp also played a role in the assignment to a work detachment. Different commandos only existed during certain phases of the construction of the Bu na-Werk: the construction management had levelling and excavation work carried out mainly until mid-1942, i.e. before the IG-Lager existed. A commando for defusing Allied bombs, on the other hand, was not needed until mid-1944. Beyond that

As far as the labour detachments were concerned, the "Buna camp" differed from all other concentration camps built up to that point: Monowitz was the first large camp to be built on the site of a private industrial company to house the prisoners deployed there; its internal organization was therefore geared towards its function as a labour pool. In order to be able to deploy as many prisoners as possible on the construction site, the otherwise predominantly internal camp commandos were reduced to a minimum²¹⁰. This was in the interests of IG, as it needed every prisoner worker, but also of the SS and the Reich, as the company paid per head.

In mid-1944, when the occupancy of the Monowitz camp had peaked at around 11,000 men, up to 110 prisoner detachments were working in parallel. Of these, a maximum of around 8,000 camp inmates marched to the construction site every morning, where more than half of the commandos worked directly for IG Auschwitz and a good quarter for the other construction companies working on the site. When the danger of air raids increased significantly in the spring of 1944, up to ten commandos were involved in the expansion of the anti-aircraft positions and shelters around the IG site. They were under the supervision of Wehrmacht troops who were responsible for the defense of the area²¹¹. Not every one of these many work detachments is documented in the sources, and only a few of them are documented in sufficient detail to allow a description of the working conditions. Nevertheless, in order to provide a realistic impression of everyday life in the "Buna labour camp", the different types of labour detachments will be presented below as examples.

Before the opening of the "Buna camp", the management of IG Auschwitz used the prisoners exclusively for physically very strenuous auxiliary work on its construction site. Their first task was the construction of access and factory roads. From mid-April 1941, 150 prisoners worked in two columns to build the road from the town of Auschwitz to the IG construction site on the grounds of the former Dwory estate²¹². The lack of technical equipment and tools made this work extremely exhausting; supposedly cheap prisoners who could work under any conditions were supposed to make up for the lack of materials. The risk of injury increased enormously and there were often serious accidents²¹³: The work on the road roller pulled by prisoners was particularly dangerous. Those who could no longer keep up the high pace of work due to exhaustion and fell to the ground usually had their legs crushed before the roller came to a halt. Until the completion of the roads in the Monowitz camp in mid-1943, a large number of prisoners worked in this commando. Almost from the beginning, the prisoners' tasks also included levelling work on the entire construction site and digging the pits for the foundations. The excavation work lasted for almost the entire construction period, but at least until the beginning of 1944²¹⁴. Inadequate work

²¹⁰ AGK, SWKr- 11, files of the Maurer trial, Maurer statement, p. 263.

²¹¹ APMO, Osw/Posener/ 14, p. 8.

²¹² Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 4737, 3rd weekly report, 21 .4. 1941.

²¹³ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 0928, Staischak statement, 3.9. 1947, p. 1.

²¹⁴ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 2384, Pfeffer statement, 13.1 1.1 1947.

The lack of protective equipment and protective clothing also led to a high risk of accidents²¹⁵. Particularly in the winter months, the cold and high work pressure led to an extremely rapid loss of strength, so that many prisoners in these commandos lost their lives.

Due to the above-mentioned construction delays during 1942, the excavation and leveling work was only about half completed in November 1942. The rapid increase in available workers from the "Buna camp" that then set in led to the creation of many new prisoner detachments. The construction management focused on completing the earthworks as quickly as possible in order to be able to start erecting the factory buildings. The labor required for the foundation

The cement required for the production of the cement blocks and the casting of prefabricated concrete parts was unloaded from the wagons by members of the "cement commando" (also known as "Kommando 4" ²¹⁶). They had to carry the 50-kilogram cement bags ²¹⁷, which often exceeded their own weight²¹⁸, from the wagons to the first or second floor of a storage building on the construction site. The time pressure was immense: 120 men had to unload 40 wagons within three hours²¹⁹. Anyone who, in the eyes of the overseers, could no longer keep up with this pace of work was "beaten with sticks or iron bars and pushed with fists and kicked with feet", as British prisoners of war observed²²⁰.

It was not for nothing that the prisoners called this commando in camp jargon "Murder Squad 4" ²²¹. The conditions at Kommando 1 were very similar: Rudolf Vitek, who later worked as a prisoner doctor, reported that the prisoners had to walk about 300 meters from the unloading point of the small railroad to the "cement depot". The route was lined with guards "every few steps", who used knuckles to force the workers to walk tirelessly²²².

Despite the predominantly used prefabricated construction method with concrete Bricks were also used. Prisoners from the "brick detachment" had to unload them, usually with their bare hands²²³ from the railroad wagons²²⁴ and take them to the various construction sites. "Kommando 2" was also used to unload and stack bricks, but also to transport iron parts.

Part of this commando, usually between 70 and 80 men strong, came from the labor education camp set up in 1943²²⁵, which was similar to the Monowitz camp.

²¹⁵ Nümbg. doc. NI- 10928, Staischak statement, 3.9. 1947, p. 1.

²¹⁶ Apparently, the Labor Deployment Department in Monowitz designated the individual labor detachments with numbers; however, these have not survived for all detachments. For clear identification, the corresponding numbers are given where known.

²¹⁷ Nümbg. doc. NI-98 18, Jakubik statement, May 23, 1947, p. 6.

²¹⁸ Nümbg. doc. NI- 12002, statement by Jähne, 22. 10. 1947.

²¹⁹ Nümbg. doc. NI-98 18, statement by Jakubik, May 23, 1947, p. 6.

²²⁰ Nümbg. doc. NI-11 694, Davison statement, 19.7. 1947, p. 2.

²²¹ Nümbg. doc. NI-9807, Wollheim statement, 3.6. 1947, p. 2.

²²² Nümbg. doc. NI-4830, statement by Vitek, 3.3. 1947, p. 2.

²²³ Nümbg. doc. NI-9807, Wollheim statement, 3.6. 1947, p. 3.

²²⁴ Nümbg. doc. NI-4827, Treister statement, 3.3. 1947, p. 1.

²²⁵ Cf. chapter V.2.

and was only separated by a fence. The IG sent alleged "loafers" there to do particularly hard work for a few weeks; all tasks therefore had to be completed at walking pace. The IG foreman in charge obviously had a particular fondness for torturing the "educational prisoners". He bribed the Reich-German Kapo, who came from Upper Silesia, with schnapps to encourage him to carry out constant beatings and maltreatment. The result of these merciless methods is hardly surprising: the daily absenteeism in "Kommando 2" was around ten percent of the target strength, which was, however, constantly replenished²²⁶. The average life expectancy was therefore less than two weeks.

Large quantities of material were required for the extensive timber constructions on the factory buildings. Here too, human labor was needed to replace the lack of large transport equipment: The members of the "Holzträgerkommando" dragged logs around 16 meters long and 30 centimeters in diameter from the unloading site to the construction site, often over hundreds of meters. Most of them were far too weak for such loads, as a former IG metalworker recalls²²⁷. Although the site management deployed around 12 to 16 men on each trunk, the prisoners had to mobilize their last reserves to carry the loads, which weighed up to a tonne²²⁸. Here too, however, they were not content with simply fulfilling the already superhuman work requirements. By bribing them with cigarettes, the IG-Meister in charge again ensured that the Kapo drove the prisoners under his command particularly rigorously²²⁹. The further processing of the wood delivered in this brutal manner was the responsibility of the "carpenter commando" ("Kommando 43"), whose main task was the boarding of the buildings²³⁰. Due to the care required, the working conditions here were somewhat more tolerable, as the IG-Bauleitung regarded it as a skilled labor commando. Arbitrary mistreatment and harassment were therefore rare here. In contrast, prisoners described the work in the "technical camp" ("Kommando 26") as very hard; here they had to carry heavy parts and tools²³¹. In a very similar way, the transportation of iron²³² or the work in the "stone commando" ("Kommando 127")²³³ overtaxed the prisoners' dwindling strength. In all of these commandos, the ruthless use of muscle power was intended to replace the lack of technical equipment or to save scarce fuel.

Once the first foundations had been laid and the cable ducts completed, the men from the "cable commando" began installing the electrical

²²⁶ Nümbg. doc. NI-9818, statement Jakubik, 23.5.1947, p. 3 f.

²²⁷ Nümbg. doc. NI-11051, Wagner statement, 3.9.1947, p. 2.

²²⁸ Nümbg. doc. NI-12383, Spetter statement, 13.1.1947, p. 2.

²²⁹ Nümbg. doc. NI-10824, Kohn statement, May 29, 1947, p. 3.

²³⁰ Nümbg. doc. NI-12383, statement Spetter, 13.1.1947, p. 2.

²³¹ Nümbg. doc. NI-11654, Rosenberg statement, 8.5.1947, p. 1.

²³² Nuremberg Doc. NI-4830, Vitek testimony, March 3, 1947, p. 1.

²³³ Nuremberg Doc. NI-12384, Pfeffer testimony, Nov. 13, 1947.

supply lines. Pulling the heavy cables through the pipes was an extremely strenuous job²³⁴. It was not uncommon for three people a day to die of exhaustion. The regular mistreatment of the IG engineer in charge contributed to the high absenteeism rate of the 80-strong commando²³⁵. In the eyes of the prisoners, however, the "concrete commando" was considered even harder. The work with the many hundredweight prefabricated concrete parts and the erection of the reinforced concrete structure supporting them exhausted the prisoners' last reserves of strength. The camp was therefore called a "death camp", where they were sent "to die in the concrete", as one prisoner reported from personal experience. Nikolae, a doctor deported from Hungary, only survived the commando because he was accidentally transferred to the infirmary as a prisoner doctor after two weeks²³⁶.

From the middle of 1943 onwards, skilled labor detachments were deployed to a greater extent when the assembly of technical equipment began in some buildings. The

"Schweißkommando" ("welding commando")²³⁷ offered the prisoners better conditions simply because the workplaces were often under roofs. The "electrical commando" ("Kommando 186") was also considered an "easy" commando, as it required "highly skilled work"²³⁸. The preparations and the start of production also led to increased stockpiling of materials on the factory premises. This gave prisoners working in the "material issue for the production plants" a good opportunity to organize exchange items that were in high demand in the camp²³⁹.

The IG management had a great interest in the quick and careful execution of the installations inside and out. It therefore ensured that the urgently needed skilled prisoner workers were not subjected to maltreatment. Comparable working conditions prevailed in the "chemists' detachment", in which trained chemists worked in the glass warehouse and methanol plant, in the azethy lene works and in the Aldol factory²⁴⁰. Although working as a chemist could sometimes mean having to carry sacks of 50 kilograms or more, as Primo Levi recalls, he was safe from gassing for the time being despite his advanced debilitation²⁴¹. Although Levi and several colleagues had already been selected and tested in the summer of 1944, they were probably not deployed in the IG Auschwitz laboratories until November 1944. The chemists, most of whom were highly qualified, then only worked for a few weeks in a position appropriate to their training.

²³⁴ Nümbg. doc. NI-1 1 051, Wagner statement, 3.9. 1947, p. 2.

²³⁵ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 2383, Spetter statement, 13.1 1947, p. 2a. On the direct responsibility of IG employees for the intolerable conditions during the labor deployment on the factory premises, see Chapter IV.2.

²³⁶ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 171 0, statement Nikolae.

²³⁷ Nümbg. doc. NI-9807, Wollheim statement, 3.6. 1947, p. 4.

²³⁸ Nümbg. doc. NI-7 1 84, statement Afrine, 5.6. 1947, p. 1.

²³⁹ Nümbg. doc. NI-9808, statement by Posener, 3.6. 1947, p. 1.

²⁴⁰ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 2384, Pfeffer statement, 13.1 1947.

²⁴¹ Cf. Levi, Mensch, p. 106 ff- 142 ff.

This example illustrates the logic behind the different working conditions in the commandos. In simple tasks such as hauling heavy loads or pulling cables through long shafts, the individual prisoner counted for nothing in the eyes of the IG-Bauleitung. For those who collapsed under the unbearable conditions, there were plenty of replacements from KL Auschwitz. However, skilled workers were needed for assembly work, which had been steadily increasing since mid-1943. As the war continued, fewer and fewer civilian skilled workers were available, so IG was increasingly dependent on prisoners with the appropriate qualifications. The specialist prisoner detachments were therefore indispensable for rapid construction progress. On the factory site, the construction management therefore did its utmost to ensure that they could be deployed. This could go so far that IG employees used their weakened but irreplaceable skilled workers for the SS: By appealing to the camp management, it was sometimes even possible to return prisoners who had already been selected to their jobs and thus save them from being gassed.

While the situation for the comparatively few prisoners in the skilled labor detachments improved somewhat due to the careful working methods required there, the situation in the actual construction detachments was exactly the opposite. The worsening war situation led to increasing time pressure, which also caused "murderous" working conditions in this construction phase: prisoners in the "chimney commando" were forced to complete a 300-foot-high chimney at such a fast pace that countless prisoners lost their lives through exhaustion. The testimony of the former inmate

Afrine's figure of 3,000 deaths in this one command is probably an exaggeration²⁴². The work in one of the coal mines of IG Auschwitz meant an almost certain death sentence for the prisoners until they were almost evacuated²⁴³. On the other hand, there were apparently still supposedly "idyllic" commandos where prisoners were kept busy washing laundry, for example²⁴⁴.

By the end of 1944, the shortage of civilian labor had become so urgent for IG Auschwitz that prisoners were now also allowed to work in the administration of the plant. In order to find suitable personnel, a group of IG Auschwitz employees went to the Monowitz camp. At the roll call area, they questioned the prisoners about their training and eventually selected some for a "book-keeping squad". Their workplace was in the auditing department, where they were housed in a separate room but were able to make contact with civilian employees²⁴⁵. At the beginning of 1943, the establishment of such a commando had still failed due to the ideological reservations of the factory management, who did not want prisoners and IG employees to work under the same roof²⁴⁶. The increasingly threatening supply situation meant that the economic

²⁴² Nümbg. doc. NI-7184, statement Afrine, 5.6.1947, p. 3.

²⁴³ Nümbg. doc. NI-10824, Kohn statement, 29.5.1947, p. 4.

²⁴⁴ USHMM, reel 70, internal IG communication, 5.6.1944.

²⁴⁵ Nümbg. doc. NI-12383, statements by Spetter, 13.1.1947, p. 3 f.

²⁴⁶ Nümbg. doc. NI-9808, Posener statement, 3.6.1947, p. 1.

The advantages of seeing the work of the prisoners obviously prevailed over ideological concerns, so that further writing detachments were set up. In the final weeks of IG Auschwitz, well-trained prisoners were then deployed in various departments to deal with correspondence, statistical compilations and the like²⁴⁷. For the prisoners, this meant a privileged job that offered good chances of survival and relative protection from maltreatment.

However, security concerns on the part of the IG and probably also the Gestapo office housed on the factory premises prevented an overly large expansion of such office commandos. In order to prevent unauthorized persons from listening in on internal company or military information, the IG's "counterintelligence officer" issued a circular to its German employees in July 1944²⁴⁸. In addition to the fundamental avoidance of long-distance calls with sensitive content, where there was always a risk of eavesdropping, the prisoners and prisoners of war deployed in the offices were to be "isolated in such a way that the use of the telephone and the eavesdropping on telephone conversations and other important official conversations is excluded". Until then, a certain carelessness seemed to have prevailed in this respect, as the circular ended with an announcement by the Gestapo that "from now on, any violation - even negligent ones - will be dealt with severely".

However, the war situation, which was increasingly turning against the German Reich, not only led to the establishment of comparatively "good" labor detachments. Since the first bombing raids in August 1944, unexploded bombs were only allowed to be dug up by prisoner detachments under the guidance of a fireman, as instructed by the IG. In this way, the management wanted to prevent what it considered to be "valuable" workers from being put in danger. In most cases, the nearest prisoner detachment was used for this task, sometimes even a specially designated detachment²⁴⁹. This cynical use of unqualified prisoners seems to have served as an example for other areas of the Reich, as a telex from the WVHA suggests²⁵⁰. The plant manager of IG Auschwitz, Walther Dürrfeld, even after the war considered the voluntary use of prisoners instead of trained specialists to defuse unexploded bombs to be a good thing. In the presence of a former prisoner, he made the following statement two years after the end of the war:

"If there are asocial elements in a camp, then it is more correct that asocial elements are made available for such dangerous work - that is how it was done throughout Germany." ²⁵¹

The deployment of prisoners on the IG construction site was only the beginning. From the fall of 1943, following the example of the Monowitz camp in the

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ USHMM, reel 70, IG circular 7004, 17.7. 1944.

²⁴⁹ Nuremberg doc. NI-4829, statement Tauber, 3.3. 1947, p. 2.

²⁵⁰ IfZ, MA-434, telex from the WVHA to HSSPF West, 1. 10.1944, in which the use of prisoners was discussed. from Cologne. Düsseldorf and Essen.

²⁵¹ Nürnberg. doc. NI-11046. statement Dürrfeld, 24.2. 1947, p. 11.

There were always other camps at coal mines or industrial companies, mainly in Upper Silesia, where prisoners from KL Auschwitz also worked. These kommandos were permanently housed at their place of work and were therefore called

²⁵² The working conditions there and the chances of survival were very poor.

had a similar spectrum as in Monowitz. However, there are no reports of "light" commandos who had to carry out office work. As a rule, these were construction and pit commandos, although with a bit of luck the prisoners were sometimes also deployed in a running production plant, where better conditions usually prevailed. With the reorganization of the Auschwitz camps in November 1943, all of these small "labour camps" at armaments factories came under the administration of what was now officially called KL Auschwitz III, the Monowitz camp.

The interior commands

The vast majority of the prisoners at Monowitz were deployed in the above-mentioned sub-camps. A decreasing percentage of prisoners were available to maintain camp operations over time²⁵³. Those who worked in such "inner detachments" carried - at least in part - a considerable special marking on his prisoner suit: "IL", which stood for "in the camp"²⁵⁴. This made it easier for the SS guards to distinguish between "work-shy" prisoners and prisoners assigned to camp activities during their patrols through the camp. All non-manual activities that were carried out within the security fence had to be carried out by the "camp commando". It was directly subordinate to the camp kapo and, depending on the tasks at hand, was reinforced on a daily basis by so-called "Arztvormelder"²⁵⁵. In a way, it fulfilled the function of a "girl for everything".

There were also several commandos in the camp who had precisely defined tasks to fulfill: one was responsible for disinfecting and handing out laundry to the prisoners. Laundry was usually changed approximately every six to eight weeks. However, the detachment was only rarely able to distribute new or as-new items of clothing. In most cases, the items handed out were the clothes of the prisoners murdered in the gas chambers of Birkenau²⁵⁶. Blood and other stains were often still visible on the suits, as over time pure disinfection replaced the cleaning of the clothing. Since the IG, as already mentioned, had taken over the catering of the Monowitz camp in February 1943, one inmate detachment worked in the modern camp kitchen, another in the separate "potato kitchen".

²⁵² APMO, Osw/Posener/ 14, p. 8 Cf. list of these satellite camps in the appendix, Table 6.

²⁵³ In any case, the WVHA reduced the target for the proportion of inmates deployed in the camp from ten percent at first to six percent later. AOK, SWKr- 11, p. 263, Maurer's affidavit on Sommer's testimony.

²⁵⁴ StA Frankfurt a.M., judgment in the criminal case 4 Ks 1/67, June 14, 1968, p. 26.

²⁵⁵ APMO, Osw/Posener/14, p. 7. Prisoners who reported to the outpatient clinic of the HKB to be examined by the camp doctor were called "Arztvormelder".

²⁵⁶ Nuremberg Doc. NI-4827, Treister testimony, March 3, 1947, p. 2.

peeling kitchen". Prisoners also prepared the meals in the SS kitchen. Each of these three detachments, a total of around 40 men, had its own Kapo²⁵⁷. They were responsible for serving the kettles filled with stew and transporting the soup to the construction site. The construction site was also the responsibility of a separate command, the "centralized distribution of esens" called²⁵⁸.

The camp nursery provided a certain amount of food to supplement the meagre rations. A small proportion of the fruit and vegetables grown there was intended for the camp kitchen, while the rest went to the SS kitchen and the prisoner infirmary. Due to the small quantities in comparison to the size of the camp, it is likely that the "simple" prisoners would never have dropped anything. The work in the nursery was quite relatively easy, so that even very weak, sometimes already selected prisoners were employed here until they were transported away²⁵⁹. There were also various craft workshops in the camp, including a carpenter's workshop, a locksmith's shop and a glazier's workshop. Their main task was to maintain the camp buildings. There was also a garage in Monowitz to keep the SS vehicles in running order. A cobbler and a tailor repaired prisoners' suits and uniforms or carried out private orders for SS men. Although this was illegal, a prisoner had no way of refusing such a request. All of these craft detachments, although much smaller than the outer detachments, had their own Kapo. In total, the camp had around 20 to 30 Kapos, who were responsible to the camp Kapo²⁶⁰.

Three prisoners worked as clerks in the Political Section. These were so-called commandos, i.e. they did not report directly to the SS, but to a functional prisoner. Scribes from the ranks of the camp inmates were also employed in other positions in the camp: For example, the lists of prisoners were kept by the report clerk²⁶¹. The clerk in the "labor deployment" department compiled the commandos and had reports about the size and composition of the commandos, as well as the camp strength and the sickness rate²⁶². Together with the members of the office, he was directly responsible to the camp elder. In addition the camp administration employed four to five "SS calf factors" who had to perform all kinds of auxiliary services²⁶³.

Stubenälteste, Blockälteste and Lagerälteste were exempt from work in the true sense of the word. However, they had to ensure order in their parlor, their block and to ensure that the roll calls were conducted in a disciplined manner and could be held accountable for this²⁶⁴. All so-called camp or interior

²⁵⁷ Nümbg. doc. NI-98 I O, statement Reinhold, August 19, 1947, p. 9, and APMO, Osw/Posener/14, p. 7.

²⁵⁸ Nümbg. doc. NI-9808, statement by Posener, June 3, 1947, p. 1.

²⁵⁹ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 383, Löwenstein statement.

²⁶⁰ StA Frankfurt a.M., Investigation Case 4 Js 798/64, p. 408, Worgul statement. APMO, Osw/Posener/ 14, p. 7.

²⁶¹ Cf. Czech, Kalendarium p. 1024.

²⁶² Nümbg. doc. NI-7967, statement Schulhof, June 21, 1947, p. 2.

²⁶³ APMO, Osw/Posener/ 14, p. 7.

²⁶⁴ Cf. Langbein, Menschen, p. 26 f.

commandos offered the prisoners better working conditions than the external commandos. The work was less strenuous, they mostly had to deal with familiar faces, and they knew the possible sources of danger. Although the prisoners were also subject to the arbitrariness of the prisoner functionaries and the SS men, their chances of survival increased greatly when they were assigned to a camp commando. The prisoners who were employed as clerks in the SS offices probably had the best working conditions in a physical sense. They were occupied with administrative tasks that were actually the responsibility of the SS men. The prisoners, who were often highly educated, were usually much better suited to performing these tasks than the members of the SS. As a result, many of the scribes managed to make themselves indispensable helpers, which ensured their survival, at least temporarily. Some SS leaders even had confidential letters or reports written by prisoners, which gave them access to a great deal of secret information. Apparently no one in the SS assumed that the prisoner writers would ever have the opportunity to pass these things on.

The clerks of the Political Department in particular acquired a certain influence through their precise knowledge of the procedures in the camp. In some cases, this influence could extend quite far: With courage and skill, it was quite possible in some circumstances to falsify transfer lists in order to save individual prisoners from the gas chamber. To do this, the file card of the prisoner in question was exchanged for that of someone who had already died. For the SS, such manipulations were hardly comprehensible, as the scribes were much more familiar with the office organization. Nevertheless, there was always the danger of being discovered. In order to be able to alter the lists in exceptional cases, strict care had to be taken not to attract attention in any way. It was therefore forbidden to manipulate the lists to any great extent, as quantitative discrepancies were most likely to be noticed during the SS checks. Daily personal contact with the SS men sometimes led to the development of a kind of trusting relationship. Skilled prisoners were thus able to influence the opinion of an SS member in the interests of their comrades²⁶⁵.

However, even the information that regularly passed through the writing rooms could be very valuable for the resistance organizations in the camp. If a selection or other SS action was imminent, this information usually reached the camp before it began. This often gave the prisoner functionaries enough time to take appropriate precautions. It was also possible to intervene for the benefit of the prisoners in the "labor deployment" department. For example, it was possible to arrange for convalescent camp inmates to initially be assigned to a light detachment in order to give them the chance to continue their recovery. However, such interventions only benefited inmates who had suffered from any kind of illness.

²⁶⁵ The source evidence on this point is very sparse; after the war, only a few survivors dared to speak of their personal contacts with SS men. However, there is no indication that the examples of Hermann Langbein and Stefan Buthner (cf. Chapter IV.6.) stand alone. Both of them, Langbein as a clerk to the site doctor of the main camp and Buthner as camp elder of the **HKB** in Monowitz, had considerable influence over their respective SS superiors.

enjoyed protection from one side of the camp. However, the ordinary prisoners were not only excluded from such special treatment, as a rule one of them had to suffer directly from it. The example of the manipulations of the "prisoner self-administration" shows once again the fundamental problem of the camp rules imposed by the SS in all its severity: for every prisoner who could be "spared", another had to "suffer". Although it was possible to achieve a certain degree of reallocation, for example according to the respective capabilities of the prisoners, the camp system as a whole, which was directed against the prisoners, could not really be changed. Within the camp, however, the clerks and "commandos" were undoubtedly among the privileged prisoners. Although they had no authority to issue instructions to other prisoners, their actual "power" often clearly exceeded that of many block elders and kapos. Almost without exception, therefore, the consent of the political groups in the camp was required to fill the position of "commandant".

Most of the other activities in the camp were more of a manual nature. The work in the camp workshops was also generally less dangerous than in the external detachments. There were fewer imponderables, the commandos were small and manageable. However, they were also subject to the arbitrariness of the SS men, who often imposed their special wishes on the shoemakers, carpenters or other craftsmen. On the other hand, illegal work could also be carried out in the camp workshops for the benefit of the prisoners, as tools were available and materials could be "organized". The same applies to the camp kitchen: even though the SS and IG closely controlled the quantities of materials and the cooking process itself, it can be assumed that there were opportunities to supplement the inadequate camp diet while working in the kitchen. All in all, it can be said that the living conditions in the inner kommandos were the best in the Monowitz camp. Ordinary prisoners therefore only managed to get such a post by chance. The prisoners working in the inmate infirmary were a special case, which will be discussed below.

Working conditions in the commandos on the construction site

The chances of survival were somewhat worse in the skilled labor detachments that were deployed on the IG Farben construction site. In principle, the prisoners deployed there had a good chance of not being killed or maltreated at their workplace out of sheer arbitrariness, as the companies were They urgently needed their skills. Nevertheless, the working conditions often did not allow for any real "skilled labor". Even the efforts of the IG to handpick qualified prisoners in the Monowitz camp²⁶⁶ could hardly increase the efficiency of the work. Even for these special commandos, adequate protective clothing and good tools were rarely available. The ever-increasing time pressure further increased the risk of accidents. Apart from this, the camp rations were not even sufficient for the comparatively less exhausting work.

²⁶⁶ Nümbg. doc. NI- 10824, Kohn statement, 29.5. 1 947, p. 3.

work in the specialized detachments was sufficient. The march to and from the work site required additional energy, so that even some skilled workers had to walk a lot. lost importance. Anyone who lost too much weight ran the risk of being sent to the gas chamber during one of the regular dissections²⁶⁷. Even a minor injury that made it impossible to work for a few weeks could be fatal. As already mentioned, it was possible for higher IG employees to have their to prevent important workers from being selected even if they were in poor health. However, this only happened extremely rarely²⁶⁸. The journey to the work site under SS supervision alone posed a further risk, as in the eyes of most guards, no concentration camp prisoner, regardless of their qualifications, had a right to exist. Even the orders of the WVHA could not change this.

The vast majority of prisoners worked in construction detachments, where no relevant work experience was required. They mainly had to carry out simple auxiliary tasks, which elsewhere were often done by machines. The working conditions, for example in the production of prefabricated concrete parts, the carrying of pipes or in the "technical camp", were correspondingly hard. All of this work

demanded more energy from the prisoners than the inadequate food in the camp could provide, as even an SS doctor confirmed in the Nuremberg trial²⁶⁹. The pressure to work was extreme, as work was usually carried out under constant supervision and any slackening of enthusiasm was immediately punished with beatings or other abuse.

was punished. Protective clothing was only available to very few, and prisoners often had to carry iron pipes with their bare hands even in winter²⁷⁰. It was probably not only in order to push ahead with the outdoor work despite the adverse weather conditions that

the IG expressly forbade the use of prisoners under the roof in the first year of construction²⁷¹. Rather, this order was probably also intended to unequivocally document the factory management's appreciation of its new workforce in all directions. Only for this reason can it be

understand why commandos, who often even lacked coats, were forced to be at their construction sites in temperatures as low as minus 30 C°²⁷². Be

If a prisoner wore a coat, he was already privileged; if he was also allowed to wear it at work, this considerably increased his chances of survival²⁷³. Attempts

prisoners to warm themselves up in the freezing temperatures, the IG supervisors prevented this as far as possible²⁷⁴. In their view, every minute that prisoners used campfires to revive their frozen limbs was ultimately at the expense of the IG.

²⁶⁷ Nuremberg doc. NI-4827, Treister testimony, 3.3. 1 947, p. 3.

²⁶⁸ Nuremberg Doc. NI-7 I 84, Afrine testimony, p. 2 f.

²⁶⁹ Nuremberg Doc. NI-61 90, Entress statement, p. 3.

²⁷⁰ Nuremberg Doc. NI-9807, Wollheim testimony, June 3, 1947, p. 3.

²⁷¹ Nuremberg doc. NI-4827, Treister testimony, 3.3.1 947, p. 1.

²⁷² Nuremberg Doc. NI-11 862, Schuster testimony.

²⁷³ This was not always the case; cf. chapter V.2.

²⁷⁴ Nuremberg doc. NI- 1 4532, 80/8 1st weekly report, 13.1 2.1 942.

In addition to the harsh working conditions, the construction detachments were a disadvantage for the prisoners due to their size alone: anonymity prevailed there, and they rarely had the opportunity to get to know and support each other. In addition, the construction management deployed these commandos at different work locations, which meant that they often had to deal with changing supervisors. The fact that the prisoners were strangers to each other gave the Kapos and civilian employees even more leeway to act arbitrarily. The work detachments confronted them as an anonymous mass, not as individuals: the traditional boundaries of civilian social behavior were therefore easier to transgress; mistreatment for alleged laziness or even without justification was therefore the order of the day. The majority of all new arrivals initially ended up in such work detachments. Their original qualifications played no part in this; indeed, higher education usually had a detrimental effect in the camp. Only a few academics, especially the doctors, were eventually able to join other commandos. The majority of them, on the other hand, suffered particularly from the harassment of the "green

The "intelligent" prisoners had nothing but contempt for the "intelligent"²⁷⁵. If an inmate did not succeed in making contact with the resistance groups or otherwise in the absence of help to change command or procure additional food, the prospect of surviving such a command for longer than three months was slim. Even a "relatively healthy prisoner" who was committed in October usually hoped in vain that he would live to see the end of winter, as one British prisoner of war recalled²⁷⁶.

The extent of the maltreatment, the severity of the work and the risk of injury may have varied considerably in these commandos, but their "character" was similar: the life of the individual prisoner was hardly worth anything; what counted for the factory management was the progress of the work. Those who "dropped out" due to exhaustion, illness or selection were immediately replaced from new transports. The fluctuation within the individual detachments was correspondingly high, which even in the large construction detachments was made more difficult by the training required in each case.

caused delays. The construction management therefore protested "very often and vehemently to the SS for technical reasons"²⁷⁷.

This behavior is symptomatic of the approach taken by the management of IG Auschwitz: the managers were certainly aware of the difficulties that the use of prisoners entailed; they regularly addressed this issue in the construction meetings and in discussions with the SS. However, the engineers did not want to recognize a direct connection with the orders they themselves had issued. The management obviously still saw the prisoners as a very special potential workforce: on the one hand, they were to work at minimum cost, i.e. with inadequate equipment, accommodation and food, but on the other hand, they were to be as productive and motivated as possible and not fall out of the work process.

²⁷⁵ Cf. Levi, *Mensch*, p. 115.

²⁷⁶ Nuremberg Doc. NI- 1 1694, Davison testimony, July 19, 1947, p. 2.

²⁷⁷ Nuremberg Doc. NI-4 184, Dürrfeld testimony, Feb. 18, 1947, p. 16.

to avoid any delays in production. In the euphoria of the beginning, the leaders of IG Auschwitz apparently believed that they would be able to override the laws of economics in their new factory: The means to this end were to be the inmates, who were obviously envisioned as a kind of living perpetuum mobile that was supposed to function without any significant energy supply. Despite many setbacks and a lack of labor productivity, the senior managers do not seem to have been aware of the incompatibility of these demands on the production factor "human labor" for a long time.

„Exhaustion commands “

The working conditions in the large construction commandos were therefore not only far outside the ethically acceptable standards of behavior in a highly developed society, they also contradicted the rules of economic expediency to a considerable extent. However, there were also commandos in Monowitz for which the aspect of economic efficiency was even less important. The commandos with the numbers 1 to 4 can hardly be described as labor commandos, as they were primarily used to "exhaust" the inmates. Here, the construction management was not concerned with unloading and transporting 50 kilogram bags of cement, bricks or iron parts; the prisoners were to be physically and mentally worn down: They had to carry out all the work at walking pace, which was meticulously supervised by a large number of guards. Anyone who collapsed or stopped under the load was beaten until they got up again or lay lifeless.

In most cases, new arrivals from the large transports of Jews were subjected to this particularly inhumane treatment in the "exhaustion camps". In the eyes of the SS guards, but also of the civilian supervisory staff, these people seemed to "deserve" such an ordeal because of their religion and their strange way of life. Other prisoners, on the other hand, were only transferred there as punishment if they had actually or allegedly violated the camp rules. In addition, "Kommando 2" also served as a punishment unit for the inmates of the labor education camp attached to Monowitz. On average, around 80 to 1,00 "foreign workers", in exceptional cases also British prisoners of war, received special treatment there, with the help of which Dürrfeld wanted to teach them the "right work ethic". However, they were not always fit for work at the end of their stay, which was limited to a few weeks: The supervisors fulfilled their

This cruel task was carried out so dutifully that a reasonably healthy man lost up to 25 kilograms of his body weight within three weeks²⁷⁸. Quite a few men lost their lives in this form of "education" in "Kommando 2".

What the prisoners in such commandos had to do had nothing to do with the usual definition of work. The ruthless exploitation of their last reserves of energy served no productive purpose in these units, but only

²⁷⁸ Nuremberg doc. NI-98 1 8, Statement Jakubik, May 23, 1947, p. 3 f.

as a means to the end of their "exhaustion" or "education". The life of a prisoner was no longer "only" considered worthless and replaceable, but its loss was at least indirectly targeted. On some days, the loss rate due to collapse on the construction site, accident or death in the camp could amount to up to a fifth of the commando strength²⁷⁹. A commando that was "exhausted" in this sense literally served the purpose of "annihilation through work".

Prisoners who had to work in the IG coal mines had the lowest chance of survival²⁸⁰. The prisoners regarded being transferred to such a detachment as a particularly harsh punishment, indeed as "synonymous with quick death"²⁸¹. The "Labor Deployment Department" sent prisoners to the Janina pit, for example, who were accused of sabotage. During the mining work underground, they had to stand for hours in water that was sometimes waist-deep, either without protective clothing or with inadequate protective clothing. The sanitary facilities in this satellite camp were similarly inadequate to those in Monowitz. There were so few washing facilities that only a small proportion of the staff were able to remove the coal dust at the end of their shift. There were no clean clothes to change into, because the second set of clothes that was sometimes issued could not fulfill its purpose: If the prisoners left their clothes at their bedside, they were stolen from the blocks in the evening; if they took them into the shaft, they became completely soaked and soiled during the shift. The prisoners also had to look after their tools carefully. For example, anyone who damaged their miner's lamp was punished by the mine supervisors on the instructions of the IG management for alleged sabotage by being deprived of food²⁸².

Despite the horrendous working conditions, the prisoners achieved high production rates. Only provisionally and sometimes improperly constructed tunnels on the one hand and brutal driving on the other increased the pace of work immensely. At times, the mines produced in stockpiles because the coal could not be removed quickly enough. The consequence of this production at all costs was "human wear and tear", which "was just as unbelievably high", as a former prisoner doctor stated²⁸³. As a rule, a prisoner had an average life expectancy of one month on arrival in the coal mine. This meant that the "human consumption" was significantly higher than in the Monowitz camp, even though only the strongest prisoners were sent to Janina to work alongside the prisoners who had been transferred.

In the sixteen months of its existence, the staff of the Janina camp was completely replaced about ten times through death or selection. On the one hand, this was due to the higher level of maltreatment reported for this camp, which was "almost exclusively carried out by the risers, head risers and the operations manager and

²⁷⁹ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 0928, Staischak statement, Sept. 3, 1947, p. 2.

²⁸⁰ For the timing and scope of these prisoner detachments, see Chapter V.3.

²⁸¹ Nümbg. doc. NI- 10824, Kohn statement, 29.5. 1 947, p. 3.

²⁸² Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 1 654, Rosenberg statement, 8.5.1 947, p. 2

ff. m Nümbg. doc. NI-7966, statement by Orlik, July 18, 1 947, p. 2.

committed by the factory manager"²⁸⁴. Together with the miserable accommodation and food, this wore down the prisoners' working capacity and resistance considerably faster. On the other hand, the special nature of the work, in a confined space and with only one stereotypical operation, allowed the work to be monitored much more closely. This led to an astonishingly high level of efficiency, but inevitably resulted in an almost unimaginable mortality rate, as the prisoners were deprived of any opportunity to rest.

With regard to the two other mines of IG Auschwitz, the Günther and Fürstengrube, the reports contradict each other. Former employees of the Fürstengrube claimed after the war that living conditions had been considerably better on its premises, which was also partially confirmed by prisoner reports²⁸⁵. However, these statements appear to refer to the "new Fürstengrube site", where coal was not yet being mined. The same could apply to the Günthergrube, where the prisoners also drove new shafts into the ground. In the final months before the evacuation of IG Auschwitz, prisoners were also deployed to mine coal in the shafts of the "old Fürstengrube". The reports available for this phase paint a similar picture to that in Janina: inadequate safety measures, a lack of protective clothing and maltreatment by civilian workers also characterized everyday working life there²⁸⁶.

In contrast to the construction and "exhaustion commandos", work in the coal mines was therefore governed by two "equal" principles: The maximum utilization of manpower, which was almost perfectly realized here, served as much to meet the high production targets as it did to "exhaust" the workers. The goals of the IG and the SS overlapped in a way that was almost fatal for the prisoners.

Hierarchy of the work commands

For the large "mass" of camp inmates, the hierarchical structure of the Monowitz camp operated by the SS was also reflected in the various work commands. At first glance, the prisoner units on the construction site can be placed in an order determined by the economic value of the respective activity. Depending on the degree to which the prisoners could be replaced, the IG management ensured a graduated quality of working conditions. In the skilled labor detachments, a prisoner therefore had a real chance of surviving the camp, as there was always a shortage of skilled workers. In the majority of the construction detachments on the IG site, on the other hand, the prisoners were deployed in jobs unrelated to their profession. For the IG, the economic value of these people was therefore measured primarily by their actual work performance. The conditions here were consequently tougher, but it was still possible to avoid work in order to save energy or to transfer to another commando. In the "exhaustion detachments", the survivors took

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ See the various statements in: Nuremberg doc. NI- 1 1786.

²⁸⁶ Nuremberg doc. NI-1 1 879, Ehrlich testimony, 15. 10.1 947, p. 1 ff.

In the coal mines, on the other hand, the prisoners' chances of escape declined rapidly, as they did in the coal mines, from which there was only a chance of escape. Prisoners there were only considered to be of economic value temporarily, if at all. Under the prevailing conditions, it had to be used up within three to four weeks. At the end of this time, the company had no interest in people who were completely exhausted and worn out. Like worn-out tools, the IG handed them over to the SS for "disposal": they were taken by truck to Birkenau, where thousands of them died in the gas chambers under the supervision of SS doctors.

Such cynical treatment of people was probably unprecedented. All too often before, rulers or other despots who had come to power through money or violence had made people work and die for their own ends. The lowest classes of the population were often enslaved, had to wear out their life energy under the worst conditions and feared for their lives. The death of a lowly worker was always accepted by the powerful, but they did not seek it. Even slaves were usually given enough food to maintain their performance and pay off the purchase price. In Auschwitz, however, the IG had no interest in preserving the labor of the prisoners in the "exhaustion detachments". The conditions on the construction site and in the camp were such that their deaths were inevitable in the shortest possible time. To describe this systematic destruction of prisoners through labor with the term "slave labor" trivializes what happened at the IG factory.

The use of prison labor as short-term, quickly worn-out "material" contradicts all traditional principles of not only ethical but also economic action. In a functioning social and political system, no private company could have acted in this way. The management of IG Auschwitz was therefore only able to practice this waste of human labor because it had accepted the permanent influx of new workers. This was made possible by a second organizing principle that overrode the economic consideration of the workforce.

The actual hierarchy-forming concept in the work detachments was also the classification of prisoners according to their "racial" or national origin, as determined by the SS. Its mode of operation was indirect: as the SS had no influence on the location, tasks and quantitative structure of the labor detachments, it used its options when assigning prisoners to certain units. The SS administration probably only rarely intervened directly. Rather, it achieved its goals by shaping the general conditions of existence in the Monowitz camp. Jewish prisoners, as the declared main ideological opponents, were therefore hardly given the opportunity to actively participate in the organization of camp procedures. As a result, they usually lacked access to information about the quality or imminent reorganization of work detachments. This made it impossible to influence the composition of a commando, however futile it may have been in view of the distribution of power within the camp. By appointing the relevant Kapos, the SS had a further advantage.

ter access to the selection and treatment of prisoners. All in all, it succeeded in instrumentalizing the "prisoner self-administration" for its own purposes. The natural desire of the two resistance organizations active in the camp to ensure the survival of their own members led to the virtually exclusive placement of Jewish prisoners in "hard" or "hard" camps.

extermination squads". Under these circumstances, the dead of the IG camp were almost exclusively Jews. The concept of the ideologues in the Reich Security Main Office to exterminate the Jews of Europe could therefore also be realized in Monowitz without major compromises²⁸⁷. Attempts by the **WVHA** and the IG to give more weight to economic concerns, for example by classifying the prisoners according to their qualifications, were only successful temporarily and to a very limited extent.

The "primacy of the economic" was only able to gain a certain degree of acceptance between spring 1943 and spring 1944. A radical change in the treatment of the prisoner laborers cannot be observed in Monowitz, despite their increasing importance for armaments production. The plans of the SS leadership to lead the Jewish prisoners of the IG camp to "extermination through labor" only came to an end when the extermination machinery in Birkenau was shut down in the fall of 1944. The escalation of war events in the final weeks of the camp's existence caused the graduated "order" of extermination to break down; the chaotic conditions led to sometimes contradictory developments. The clear hierarchy of the commandos lost its power. Fear of the approaching Red Army triggered open brutality on the part of the supervisory forces in many commandos to an even greater extent than before. On the other hand, the economic value of the prisoner laborers increased: the absence of the usual, constantly arriving transports of European Jews now also led to a shortage of labor as a production factor in the Auschwitz camps. Prisoners who would certainly have been gassed a few weeks earlier due to exhaustion or injury were now employed by the factory management in light work. Shortly before the end of the year, the Fürstengrube even set up an "invalid squad" consisting of prisoners with broken bones and other injuries²⁸⁸.

However, this was an absolutely exceptional occurrence that was only possible in the last few weeks before the factory and the pits were closed down. In the previous two and a quarter years of the Monowitz camp's existence, the IG managers responsible for labor deployment showed no interest whatsoever in prisoners who were only partially fit for work. Even harmless injuries that excluded a Jewish prisoner from his work detail for more than two weeks usually meant a certain death sentence. The type of commando into which a prisoner was divided was therefore one of the key factors that determined his survival. Those who did not manage to get into an "easy" commando built

²⁸⁷ The view put forward by Pingel, *Häftlinge*, p. 168 f., that the categorical differences between the prisoners were suppressed in the "third period" by the "demands of armaments work" and replaced by their qualifications, only applies to Monowitz to a limited extent.

²⁸⁸ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 0907, communication from the camp leader of the Fürstengrube, 7. 12. 1944.

within a few weeks, became ill or suffered injuries and was eventually sent to the infirmary as "unfit for work".

"The plant pays particular attention to maintaining and restoring health. As this depends to a large extent on local conditions, workload, working conditions and accident prevention, these points are given special consideration in the measures taken by the plant management."

Management of IG Auschwitz²⁸⁹

5. Prisoner infirmary and selection

The consequences of the ruthless use of prisoners were most evident in the prisoner infirmary (**HKB**). Miserable working conditions and completely inadequate accommodation and food turned almost every camp inmate into a patient sooner or later. Of course, the HKB had little in common with a conventional infirmary: the IG factory management, which only wanted to have prisoners in Monowitz who were fit for work anyway, tried by all means to keep the costs of medical care to a minimum. Thanks to the ingenuity of the prisoners, it was nevertheless possible over time to turn the infirmary into a reasonably functioning infirmary. However, the formative influence of the IG made the HKB a dangerous place for many patients.

Construction of the prisoner infirmary

When the "Buna camp" was opened in November 1 942, the HKB consisted of only one barrack, in which prisoners with minor injuries or illnesses were treated²⁹⁰. This "ambulance" was located at the eastern end of the camp, as the last block next to the camp fence and directly north of the main camp road²⁹¹. From around mid-1 943, the building was used for the admission and preliminary examination of prisoners awaiting inpatient treatment in the newly established departments of the **HKB**. Initially, however, the two or three inmate doctors and the few inmate nurses had only the most basic means at their disposal to care for the prisoners. Prisoners with serious illnesses or injuries therefore had to be referred to the main camp's **HKB** during the first few months of the camp's existence.

²⁸⁹ APMO, D-Au III, Monowitz, 9c, 'Leistungskampf', 1.12.1 942, here p. 19.

²⁹⁰ Detailed information on the prisoner infirmary in Monowitz can be found in Makowski, Organization, Makowski's interpretation of the source material does not, however, appear to be valid in every case. A consistent problem with his account is the limitation to the sources held at the Auschwitz memorial.

²⁹¹ On this and the following: StA Frankfurt a.M., judgment in the criminal case 4 Ks 1 /67, June 14, 1968, p. 21 -29.

The rapidly increasing number of prisoners soon made it necessary to expand the **HKB**. As early as the beginning of 1943, two further blocks were therefore set up to the north of the outpatient block: what was later known as Internal I and "Surgery". However, major operations were not yet possible in the surgical department at this time, as the necessary equipment was lacking. Around 20 people were employed in the three infirmary barracks, only a small number of whom had previous medical knowledge²⁹². As with the other posts, they were selected primarily according to their position within the camp hierarchy. Relationships with influential inmates were more important than qualifications. Work in the HKB was coveted because it was considered comparatively easy and offered the prospect of better rations. Overall, despite the higher risk of infection, the chances of survival were far better in the HKB than in most other commands. In the first few months, the staff of the **HKB** therefore consisted mainly of Reich Germans and only a few Polish prisoners.

The infirmary had an autonomous position in relation to the rest of the camp, meaning that the camp elder of the prisoners' camp had no authority to issue instructions on the grounds of the HKB. His counterpart here was the "HKB camp elder", who was personally responsible for all matters relating to the infirmary. He was not subordinate to any other prisoner functionary, but received his instructions directly from the SS doctor in charge, or in his absence from the SS subordinate in charge, the so-called Sanitätsdienstgrad (SOG). There were also block elders in the barracks of the infirmary with a similar area of responsibility as in the rest of the camp. However, only around ten inmate nurses and two to three inmate doctors were responsible for medical care at the beginning, although this number increased significantly with the expansion of the HKB. In the first few months of the camp's existence, the term "doctor" referred exclusively to the area of activity of the respective inmate and said nothing about their qualifications. Providing competent medical care for the exhausted, sick or injured prisoners was obviously not initially the task of the infirmary. On the other hand, the SS attached the usual great importance to the orderly administration and supervision of the HKB. For this reason, there was also a separate office here, where the arrivals and departures were recorded in detail²⁹³. This structure made the HKB largely independent of the rest of the camp; it was de facto a "camp within a camp".

The first camp elder at **HKB** Monowitz was Ludwig Wörl, a man from Munich a political prisoner who had been transferred from Dachau concentration camp to Auschwitz²⁹⁴. Many camp inmates described him as a "good" functional prisoner who stood up for the interests of the prisoners in Monowitz. In March 1943, the SS transferred Wörl back to the Auschwitz main camp, where he was again the oldest inmate in the HKB. His successor Heinrich Schuster, a political

²⁹² StA Frankfurt a.M., judgment in the criminal case 4 Ks 1/67, 1 4.6. 1 968, p. 21, also Nümbg. doc. NI-6 1 90, Entress statement, 1 4.4. 1 947, p. 4.

²⁹³ StA Frankfurt a.M., judgment in the criminal case 4 Ks 1 /67, 14.6. 1 968, p. 38.

²⁹⁴ APMO, Osw/Posener/ 1 4, p. 33.

prisoner from Austria, was described by his fellow prisoners as "very decent, but careful"²⁹⁵. He only stayed in the Monowitz camp for a short time. Both camp elders were political prisoners and had no medical training. Despite their lack of any qualifications had a negative impact on patient care and the expansion and operation of the HKB²⁹⁶. Wörl and Schuster had placed the care of the prisoners in the hands of their close comrades, most of whom were facing medical problems for the first time in Monowitz. Despite their good will and compassion for the sick prisoners, the staff were therefore completely overstretched²⁹⁷. Given the particularly difficult conditions in Monowitz, the treatment of the patients had to suffer as a result.

A Czech doctor vividly described what it was like on a ward of the HKB during this time: "*Diarrhea*. This was generally referred to as shitting and the diarrhea block in the infirmary was called the shitting block. Here, the medical work was led by the printer Klimek (a Viennese Social Democrat), who was no stranger to on his original methods of fighting diarrhea. A diagnosis of dysentery, typhoid fever, paratyphoid fever etc. was never made, but every Diarrhea per se is dismissed as bullshit."²⁹⁸ The consequences of this poor medical care were devastating. In conjunction with the extreme workload of the prisoners in this initial phase, the death toll rose to an unprecedented level: of the almost 4,000 people who were housed in Monowitz at the turn of 1942/43, only around half were still alive in February.

Reorganization of the HKB

The high number of illnesses and deaths soon attracted the attention of the factory management, as the prisoner workers who had just been assigned to the construction site were already missing again. The protests of the IG against the obvious lack of medical expertise forced the SS camp management to take action: In March 1943

SS doctor Horst Fischer was commissioned by Wirths to take over medical supervision of the Monowitz camp²⁹⁹. He was to remedy the unsustainable conditions in view of the economic requirements of IG Auschwitz. During his induction, Wirths emphasized "the importance of the camp to the war effort, where

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 1 262, statement by Neubert, 21.7.1 971.

²⁹⁷ The description by Makowski, *Organization*, p. 121 ff., lacks a critical reflection on the effects of the lack of qualifications of the infirmary staff. In his eyes, the "greatest possible medical help" for the prisoners apparently consisted of placing "long-serving communist prisoners" in key positions.

²⁹⁸ Nümbg. doc. NI-4830, statement by Vitek, 3.3. 1947, p. 4.

²⁹⁹ Before Fischer, SS-Obersturmführer Bruno Kitt (October to December 1942) and SS-Hauptsturmführer Helmuth Vetter (December 1942 to March 1943) were camp doctors in Monowitz. The information in Makowski, *Organization*, p. 1 29, according to which SS-Obersturmführer Friedrich Entress and SS-Obersturmführer Werner Rhode held this function from March to November 1943, is not plausible. Makowski's data on the change from Fischer to SS-Obersturmführer Hans Wilhelm König in September 1944 are, however, correct.

he went so far as to link the importance of this facility with the final victory"³⁰⁰. Over the next few months, Fischer did indeed set about improving the treatment facilities in Monowitz in order to get the prisoners back to work more quickly and reduce their mortality rate.

In any case, this was the task that the SS doctors had been given by the **WVHA** for some time. At the end of December 1 942, even Berlin was suddenly surprised at how high the inmate mortality rate in the concentration camps actually was. Within a very short space of time, almost half of the current admissions had "dropped out due to death", as a letter to the concentration camp doctors put it³⁰¹. However, this ran counter to the new economic tasks assigned to the prisoners by the planners in Oranienburg. It was not the fact of the many deaths that called the WVHA into action, but the resulting consequences: "With such a high death rate, the number of prisoners can never be brought up to the level ordered by the Reichsführer SS." The camp doctors should therefore "use all the means at their disposal" to ensure "that the mortality rate in the individual camps is significantly reduced". "The best doctor in a concentration camp", the **WVHA** now proclaimed, "is not the one who believes that he must attract attention through inappropriate harshness, but the one who keeps the ability to work as high as possible through supervision and exchange at the individual workplaces". In Monowitz, however, the SS had little opportunity to influence the prisoners' diet and working conditions; both areas had been transferred to the IG. The young SS doctor Fischer therefore had to concentrate on improvements in the infirmary.

To this end, Fischer initially considered it necessary to reorganize the HKB, which at least met the basic medical requirements. As one of the first measures, on June 20, 1943, he brought the Polish political prisoner and young doctor Stefan Budziaszek, who soon called himself "Buthner" in German, from the infirmary of the Jawischowitz subcamp to Monowitz as the "camp elder KB"³⁰². At the same time, the SS doctors at Auschwitz were now increasingly pressing for the demands they had been making since spring 1943 to expand the HKB in Monowitz in line with the increasing number of inmates. This request met with fierce resistance from the management of IG Auschwitz, who had already rejected the SS's wish to build the HKB blocks in stone instead of wood before the camp opened³⁰³. Even now, Walther Dürrfeld did not allow himself to be dissuaded from "keeping the Monowitz infirmary as small as possible", as he primarily wanted to have "fit-for-work" prisoners in Monowitz³⁰⁴. By increasing the size of the HKB, he evidently saw the

³⁰⁰ StA Frankfurt a.M., investigative case 4 Js 798/64 (copy from 4 Ks/63). P. 1421, statement by Fischer, 2/22/1966.

³⁰¹ On this and the following: Nümbg. doc. NI-10815, WVHA to concentration camp doctors, 28.12.1942.

³⁰² StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 1458, statement by Buthner, May 3, 1960.

³⁰³ Nuremberg Doc. NI-10930, Doemming testimony, August 28, 1947, p. 5.

³⁰⁴ Nuremberg Doc. NI-6190, Entress statement, 14.4.1 947, p. 5.

Monowitz's intended function as a pure labor reservoir was jeopardized. For the In the event that the HKB in Monowitz was no longer sufficient for the sick, the IG proposed the alternative of "returning the sick prisoners to the Auschwitz concentration camp"³⁰⁵.

The management obviously wanted nothing to do with the many prisoners who were seriously injured or died in Monowitz or on the construction site. It massively, and initially successfully, resisted the demands of the SS

after the construction of "an operations building, a section room and a corpse incinerator in the Monowitz camp"³⁰⁶. In this position, Bau

Both rejected this request – as two IG employees later recalled – "for psychological reasons"³⁰⁷: the sight of a crematorium on the IG grounds would have confronted them all too directly with the consequences of the work they had enforced. On this point at least, they probably wanted to distinguish themselves from the other Auschwitz La. Without presenting any further arguments, Dürrfeld also urged the IG company doctor Peschel to support his position, as he later reported.

tete. Although so many prisoners died in the IG camp that the SS had "difficulties" with the "transportation of the dead from the Monowitz camp"³⁰⁸, the collective resistance of the factory management prevented the construction of the required facilities. The IG's support for the expansion of the HKB and its equipment was correspondingly low in the following months. The nursing staff and doctors quickly realized that they were not working in a hospital as conventionally defined. The recovery of the patients was not the main focus here. The former inmate Staischak summarized what was at stake here in an exemplary way in

Words: "The infirmary of the Monowitz concentration camp had the sole task of repairing tools. The doctors had the task of restoring the prisoners quickly and with the simplest possible means."³⁰⁹

Nevertheless, the new camp elder Buthner, with the support of the SS doctors, managed to more than double the size of the HKB in a relatively short time.

By September 1943, he had initially set up five more blocks for inpatient treatment³¹⁰. The medical equipment was now also considerably improved. Among other things, Buthner and his colleagues managed to install an aseptic

³⁰⁵ Nuremberg doc. NI- 10930, Doemming statement, 28.8. 1947, p. 5.

³⁰⁶ Nuremberg doc. NI- 14575, testimony Peschel, 28.2. 1948, p. 2 f.

³⁰⁷ Nümbg. doc. NI-1 4287, Rossbach statement, Jan. 21, 1948, p. 5, and Nümbg. doc. NI-98 19, statement Faust, 7.8.1947, S. 5.

³⁰⁸ Nümbg. doc. NI-14575, Peschel statement, 28.2. 1948, p. 3.

³⁰⁹ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 0928, Staischak statement, 3.9. 1947, p. 3.

³¹⁰ For an overview of the individual blocks and their respective areas of responsibility, see Makowski, Organization, S. 119.

operating theater. They also organized a steam boiler for additional heating and a separate disinfection chamber for the HKB. In the spring of 1944, a medical technician imprisoned in Monowitz even began to manufacture devices for electrocoagulation of bleeding and pain relief using diathermy³¹¹. In addition, the HKB staff constructed a makeshift X-ray unit and carried out experiments with electrical anaesthesia in order to circumvent the lack of anaesthetics.

However, the general hygienic conditions in HKB Monowitz were still just as inadequate as in the other camp sections. The interior furnishings also corresponded to those of the residential blocks: The dormitories were filled with three-story beds placed so closely together in three rows that only two narrow corridors led through them. Of the approximately 150 beds, almost all were occupied by two patients each. On average, around 250 patients were housed in one block³¹². There was no toilet inside the building; the only "sanitary facility" was usually a wooden barrel placed in a corner of the room. However, a large number of the patients were permanently bedridden; they therefore had no opportunity to wash themselves, use the barrel or even go to the washroom outside the block³¹³. Some toilets may only have been installed later during the further expansion of the infirmary³¹⁴. Bed sheets were only available in the surgical ward, but they could not be washed and disinfected regularly³¹⁵. In the other wards, the patients lay on bare straw sacks, which became a source of infection for subsequent patients³¹⁶. In keeping with the inadequate hygienic conditions, the HKB barracks were also characterized by a high level of filled with a stench. Even Dürrfeld, who usually liked to see for himself the "good" living conditions of the prisoners in Monowitz, did not penetrate any further than the door of a HKB barrack³¹⁷.

³¹¹ The written record of the memorial report, StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 1 60, statement by Kujawa, 26.9.1966, refers to a "cauterization apparatus". The

This spelling is probably due to a hearing error; the form commonly used in German today is "Kauterization." This involves using a metal tip or wire heated by an electric current to destroy body tissue, which is used to stop bleeding, among other things. The same presumably applies to the procedure known as "Diateme" is a traditional treatment method. Diathermy is probably behind this, in which heat is applied to the body to relieve pain and cramps. High-frequency alternating current is used as the heat source.

³¹² Cf. Levi, Mensch, p. 51.

³¹³ Nümbg. doc. NI-4827, Treister statement, 3.3.1 947, p. 2.

³¹⁴ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 1 60, statement by Kujawa, September 26, 1966.

³¹⁵ Nümbg. doc. NI-61 90, statement by Entress, 14.4. 1 947, p. 4, also Nümbg. doc. NI-4827, statement Treister, 3.3. 1 947, p. 2. Treister states that there were only sheets in the internal department, which is possibly due to a mix-up.

³¹⁶ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 0928, Staischak statement, 3.9. 1 947, p. 3.

³¹⁷ Nümbg. doc. NI-4827, Treister statement, 3.3. 1 947, p. 2.

According to former inmates, the HKB in Monowitz had nevertheless developed into the best-equipped hospital in a concentration camp under the new camp elder, both in terms of personnel and technology³¹⁸. This is all the more astonishing given that the factory management insisted until the very end on keeping the HKB as small as possible. Contrary to their intentions, however, IG-Auschwitz had nevertheless provided the basis for the comparatively good medical equipment: All the parts for the technical equipment manufactured in the camp had been fetched by the prisoners from the IG depots. SS doctors and the medical officers, to whom this equipment could not remain hidden, tolerated this clever organization of the prisoners in the IG magazines³¹⁹. In addition, there was an extraordinary concentration of medical luminaries from various European universities, including Professor Robert Waitz, who later worked in Strasbourg³²⁰. Their many years of experience in diagnosis and therapy must have saved many a prisoner's life, even under the difficult conditions in Monowitz. Nevertheless, it should not be overlooked that expensive treatment options only ever benefited a small proportion of the sick. A lack of medication and completely inadequate hygienic conditions, on the other hand, determined the chances of recovery for most of the up to 1,200 prisoners that the HKB was able to accommodate in its eight barracks in the final stage of expansion³²¹. Medical expertise and technical innovation could do little to counter the inhumane living and working conditions in Monowitz.

Admission to the HKB

Most of the prisoners were sent to the HKB because of "general debilitation", which was noticeable after a few weeks in almost everyone who worked on the Buna construction site. The poor hygienic conditions and the cramped accommodation also contributed to the fact that even strong and healthy men became susceptible to infections within a short time. In some commandos, it was common for prisoners to collapse from exhaustion directly at their place of work. Even in winter, they would often remain lying down for several hours, as the prisoners were not allowed to help them during working hours. Only after work was finished could their comrades carry them back to the camp for treatment. This was a great challenge for the prisoners themselves, who were already weakened; as a rule, several of them had to support each other. Only after the evening roll call with full commando strength had been completed were they allowed to take the collapsed prisoners to the HKB, where help often came too late³²². The same applied to the prisoners who had been

³¹⁸ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 208, statement by Cuenca, 2.2.1968.

³¹⁹ Nümbg. doc. NI-1 2069, statement of Dr. Herzog, 21.1.0.1 947, p. 3. Nümbg. doc. NI-9808, statement by Posener, 3.6.1 947, p. 5 f.

³²⁰ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 428, statement by Waitz, 2.7.1 969. Makowski, Organization, p. 177 ff., provides a list of the doctors and assistants who worked at HKB Monowitz.

³²¹ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 147, statement by Makowski, 1 4.9.1 966. In January 1 945, another protection block was added at short notice; see Makowski, Organization, p. 1 19.

³²² Nümbg. doc. NI-1 0928, Staischak statement, 3.9.1 947, p. 2.

had been mistreated by their Kapos or the civilian workers. The prisoner workers even had to carry their colleagues who had already died on the construction site to the roll call area before they were allowed to take them to the HKB³²³ : The SS did not allow them to leave as long as the commandos were not complete and the numbers were not noted in the strength book. But the block elders also had an interest in ensuring that half-dead prisoners attended roll call supported by their fellow prisoners. This was because the block still received a full ration for all those who were brought to the HKB afterwards.

*Injured or ill prisoners who were still able to walk had to undergo an admission procedure at the **HKB** that often lasted for hours. The criteria used to decide on admission or rejection were not always the same. In the early days, the inmate nurses initially admitted anyone they deemed in need of treatment. The result was a constantly overcrowded infirmary. After the reorganization, the HKB staff therefore only admitted prisoners based on a doctor's opinion. The procedure was as follows: In the evening hours, when most inmates were seeking medical care, only inmate nurses were present to make an initial pre-selection among the patients. Anyone who seemed so seriously ill or injured that they required inpatient treatment was declared a "doctor's pre-notifier"³²⁴. A scribe would then note down his number and the prisoner did not have to go to work with his commando the next morning. Instead, he had to report to the **HKB**, where a prisoner doctor examined him during the course of the day and then decided on his final admission.*

The prisoner doctors had to proceed according to guidelines agreed between the IG factory management and the SS doctors. According to these guidelines, they were only allowed to treat inpatients who had the prospect of being fit for work again within a fortnight³²⁵. The rest were to be deported to the main camp. In practice, such prisoners were sent back to their commando, and during the last few months before evacuation, they were usually transferred to the so-called "protection block". In both cases, they either died within days because they were not treated, or they fell victim to the next camp selection. The "camp elder HKB" essentially adhered to these guidelines. Buthner was thus able to keep the official sick rate low and limit the number of sections in the infirmary. Most of the prisoners who came to the HKB, often many hundreds every evening during the winter months, therefore only received outpatient treatment³²⁶. However, the options were very limited: Wounds could be cleaned and disinfected, ointments applied and scantily covered. Even in the case of frostbite, however, there was usually

³²³ Nümbg. doc. NI-5847, Epstein statement, 3.3. 1 947, p. 3.

³²⁴ Cf. Levi, Mensch, p. 48.

³²⁵ Nümbg. doc. NI-5847, Epstein statement, 3.3.1 947, p. 2.

³²⁶ In the second half of 1944, with the exception of December, the number of prisoners treated as outpatients daily was always over 1,000. This means that about 10 percent of the camp was treated as outpatients and up to another 10 percent were in the infirmary; cf. the table in Makowski, Organization, p. 143.

Only paper bandages were available, which offered little protection and only lasted for a short time.

For one of the most common health problems, however, admission to the HKB was essential: Hundreds of prisoners suffered from diarrhea, usually caused by the inedible, barely digestible food or the consumption of contaminated water. A block had therefore been set up in the HKB especially for these patients. This was where the highest mortality rate in the HKB was recorded, as the two-day fast required for dietary reasons at the beginning of treatment was fatal for many of the completely exhausted inmates. Those who survived this first hurdle were given a diet which, however, could hardly contribute to their recovery as it had no more nutritional value than the usual camp food. In order to prevent prisoners from remaining on the "diarrhea block" longer than absolutely necessary, the nurses regularly checked their condition. Primo Levi's description of the procedure used illustrates the inhumane atmosphere vividly: The diarrhea patients "are checked every third day. They line up along the corridor; in front are two metal bowls, next to them the nurse with a list, watch and pencil. The patients present themselves in pairs and have to prove on the spot and immediately that their diarrhea still persists; they are given exactly one minute to do so. They then show the results to the nurse, who examines and assesses them. They quickly wash out the bowls in a special tub, then it is the next two patients' turn. Among those waiting, some squirm in the agonizing effort to hold back the precious evidence for another twenty or ten minutes; others, who have nothing available at this moment, squeeze their veins and muscles with the opposite effort. The nurse takes this in his stride

He chews his pencil, looks at his watch and looks at the samples that are continuously submitted to him; in cases of doubt, he takes the bowl to the doctor."

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Hunger oedemas and "severe emaciation" were further symptoms that led to many prisoners being admitted to the infirmary³²⁸. Among the Under camp conditions, no help was usually possible here. However, naturally strong and vigorous people had a certain chance of regaining some strength simply by being released from work. Many other illnesses, which were easily treatable under "normal circumstances", often ended fatally in the camp: for example, the inadequate sewage disposal in the area around Auschwitz caused a major diphtheria epidemic in the summer of 1943, the outbreak of which was which was probably also facilitated by the weakened immune system of many camp inmates³²⁹. Due to the lack of treatment options, several hundred probably fell victim to the complications of the infection. In the autumn and winter months, there were unusually high numbers of cases of pneumonia, which were mainly due to the poor working and accommodation conditions in large camps.

³²⁷ Levi, Mensch, p. 55 f.

³²⁸ Nümbg. doc. NI-5847, statement Epstein, 3.3. 1947, p. 1 f.

³²⁹ Nümbg. doc. NI-6 190, statement by Entress, 14.4. 1947, p. 7.

cold: Inadequate clothing, which also barely dried out during the night, made the prisoners extremely vulnerable. For those who were infected, there was hardly any chance of survival.

The regular supply of medicines was completely inadequate. However, as with the equipment, the prisoners also managed to improve the supply in this respect by trading and smuggling medicines from the constantly arriving transports³³⁰. However, it is difficult to gain a clear picture of the actual availability of medicines, as the prisoners' reports are too varied. The majority of statements, however, state that almost no medication was available. According to these recollections, approximately twenty aspirin and five to ten Cybacol tablets were available per day for 1,80 prisoners, roughly the occupancy of one block³³¹. A single inmate, on the other hand, reported that there was a sufficient supply of medication due to the new arrivals³³². How a patient experienced the supply situation probably also depended on his position within the camp hierarchy in this case. Rare medicines were also available to high-ranking prisoners in functional positions when a "normal" prisoner could no longer even obtain a simple painkiller. The assessment of the supply of medication was probably very different even for the staff of the HKB, depending on their position.

Many of the health problems caused by the cold climate due to thin and perforated The lack of clothing, coats, hats and gloves was not something that could be remedied with medication anyway. In the winter of 1942/43 in particular, countless prisoners suffered severe frostbite. They often lost fingers when they had to carry iron pipes with their bare hands in temperatures as low as minus 30° C. The wooden shoes worn by almost all prisoners also provided such poor insulation that many of them also suffered damage to their lower extremities. The lack of bandages and the fact that they were immediately exposed to frost made treatment practically hopeless.

During the summer months, however, the number of accidents increased significantly due to the poor working conditions. A lack of safety precautions, time pressure and exhaustion usually led to bruises, cuts and, almost inevitably, blood poisoning. A fracture was considered a death sentence in the camp, as healing or even a return to work within a fortnight was illusory. Patients with phlegmons had a similarly poor prognosis. These purulent inflammations of the feet and lower legs could hardly be treated, as they reappeared immediately after a stay in a concentration camp due to the constant strain of marching to and from the camp. The main cause of these symptoms were the ill-fitting wooden shoes, which inevitably

³³⁰ Nümbg. doc. NI- 10928, Staischak statement, 3.9. 1947, p. 4.

³³¹ Nümbg. doc. NI-4827, Treister statement, 3.3. 1947, p. 2, and StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 228, statement by Drohocki, July 22, 1968.

³³² StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 1 255, statement by Samuelides, June 29, 1971.

This often led to blisters and wounds, which then often became infected³³³. The prisoners then spoke of "fat feet". Jewish prisoners with phlegmons or other chronic illnesses in particular tried to avoid being sent to the HKB for as long as possible³³⁴. Although they also had the chance to recover a little from the strenuous work in the infirmary for a short time, their risk of falling victim to selection was particularly high.

Selections in Monowitz

There were various types of selection in Monowitz. During the so-called camp selection on the roll call square and the selection in the camp barracks, all prisoners were examined for their ability to work. The selections in the hospital blocks and in the HKB courtyard were to determine the number of

of the sick in the HKB³³⁵. In addition, there were selections when the prisoners marched out to work in the morning³³⁶, to which all "Buna commandos" were subjected. The aim of all these selections was to separate out those prisoners from the crowd and remove them from the camp who were no longer considered fit for work. In this way, they consistently continued the selections that had already "sent the old, the weak and women with children to the gas" when the deportation transports arrived. Anyone who was no longer able to work had definitively forfeited their right to life in Monowitz, the brief reprieve from murder was over.

The process of selection describes the superficial examination of the prisoners by visual inspection. Only sometimes did the SS doctors check the prisoners' fat reserves by "tapping" their buttocks. Those who appeared too weak to work were first noted down on a list. After a few hours, sometimes only after two days, trucks came to pick them up from the camp and usually took them directly to the gas chambers in Birkenau.

It is not possible to determine exactly when the first selection in Monowitz took place. However, the surviving sources from the HKB indicate that weakened prisoners were sorted out and replaced in Monowitz from the very beginning, i.e. from November 1942. In the first months of the camp, Helmuth Vetter, a former employee of IG Farben, was responsible for this as SS camp doctor. More detailed information about the course of the selections is available from witness reports for the period from

³³³ Nümbg. doc. NI-5847, Epstein statement, 3.3. 1947, p. 3.

³³⁴ Nevertheless, the number of prisoners registered in the infirmary often amounted to up to 10 percent of the camp population, and on some days it was significantly higher. However, the available statistical data for the individual months, as published by Makowski, *Organization*, p. 143, should only be used with caution, as they were obtained from a diagram. By forming a monthly average value, the actual fluctuation range is lost and thus suggests a sickness rate that is permanently above 5 percent. However, this contradicts other sources, as the value was at or below this mark, at least following a selection in the **HKB**.

³³⁵ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. I 63, statement Papaj, 21. 6. 1966; *ibid*, p. 45, Aus says Posnanski, 16.2. 1966.

³³⁶ Nümbg. doc. NI-5847, statement of Epstein, 3.3.1947, p. 4. nümbg. doc. NI-7967, statement by Schulhof, 21. 6. 1947, p. 4.

March 1 1943, when Friedrich Entress took over the supervision and Horst Fischer the medical care of the Monowitz camp³³⁷. At this point, the entire selection procedure in the Auschwitz camps changed. SS site doctor Wirths enforced the order of Department D III of the WVHA, according to which selections were henceforth to be carried out exclusively by the SS doctors³³⁸. The reason for this was probably that the use of prisoners in the WVHA was now viewed more from an economic point of view. The previously "responsible SS leaders or SS ranks" had "proceeded too rigorously in the selection of prisoners", so that "too many prisoners who were still fit for work were sent to the gas prematurely", as Fischer later recalled³³⁹. In the first few months after the opening of the Monowitz camp, the guards had evidently been so focused on the destruction of the ideological enemy that the fulfillment of armaments management tasks was jeopardized. The changed orientation of the use of prisoners was easier to convey to the SS doctors than to the guards, who had years of experience in "security" and "education". The WVHA leadership thus made the work of the SS doctors an integral part of the maximum economic utilization of the prisoners' labour. Before starting work in Monowitz, SS doctor Fischer was explicitly instructed in his new task by the site doctor: "Wirths drew my attention to the fact that it would be important to be able to start production in this factory as quickly as possible. As a doctor - and this is how Wirths put it - I had to conclude from this that the most important thing would be to keep the prisoners fit for the work planned there as long as their physical condition permitted. This did not mean - taking the whole situation into account - that I should take special care to keep the prisoners healthy [...], but rather not be too hasty and not take sick leave too quickly or make to have them." ³⁴⁰

Wirths was able to tell his colleague Fischer straight away what was important in his work, as the two knew each other from their joint basic training in the Waffen SS. Fischer had been a member of the general SS since 1933 and had been drafted at the start of the war as a 27-year-old assistant doctor. After falling ill while serving in the troops, he met Obersturmbannführer Dr. Lolling, the SS doctor responsible for all concentration camps at the time, at an SS convalescent home. In response to Fischer's wish, expressed in a conversation, to continue his surgical training, Lolling offered him the opportunity to come to his area of responsibility, where he would be able to work for the SS. "would have sufficient opportunity to further develop [his] knowledge" ³⁴¹. In fact, the WVHA transferred him to KL Auschwitz in November 1942, where

³³⁷ Nuremberg Doc. NI-6190, Entress statement, 1 4.4. 1947, p. 2. StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 1419, statement by Fischer, 22.2. 1 966.

³³⁸ Cf. Czech, Kalendarium, p. 1 020.

³³⁹ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 1 420, statement by Fischer, February 22, 1966.

³⁴⁰ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 1 421, statement by Fischer, 22.2. 1 966.

³⁴¹ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 1417 f., statement by Fischer, February 22, 1966.

To his surprise, Fischer came across his "good friend" Wirths. There he underwent a rather unusual medical training course to become a surgeon. After just a few months of service on the ramp in Auschwitz, however, Fischer had obviously learned so much that his superior Wirths entrusted him with the medical supervision of the "Buna camp", which was still under construction. In November 1943, he then promoted him to deputy site doctor.

Causes for selections

Within a short space of time, Fischer realized that the combination of the prevailing living conditions in Monowitz and the workload demanded of the prisoners was bound to lead to extremely rapid physical deterioration. A high sickness rate and the associated permanent overcrowding of the **HKB** seemed inevitable to him. It was clear to Fischer that "the actual purpose of the transfer to Monowitz would not be achieved", as the required labor force would fail within just three to four months. However, the management of IG Auschwitz was apparently unwilling to accept this connection: It was neither

for the expansion of the HKB nor to improve the completely inadequate accommodation, food and equipment of the prisoners in the Monowitz camp³⁴².

On the contrary, Dürrfeld and his employees reacted as if the rapid deterioration of the prisoners working on their construction site was not connected to their instructions. Instead, they shifted to a simple economic perspective, according to which they only wanted to see the inmate workers as having productive value, but no longer as human beings. Instead of tackling the causes of the lack of performance by improving living conditions, the factory management instead began to put pressure on the SS. To this end, Dürrfeld decided to increase the daily rates for the prisoners provided in the event of illness.

only for a limited time (14 to 21 days) to the warehouse management³⁴³

Two circumstances made this rigorous attitude possible for the factory management: firstly, there was no shortage of prisoners in Auschwitz, as new transports were constantly rolling in from all over Europe; secondly, the head of Department D II of the **WVHA**, Gerhard Maurer, who was in charge of labor deployment, had assured them that all prisoners who were no longer fit for work would be exchanged for healthy and strong new arrivals. From the point of view of IG Auschwitz, there was therefore no need to take care of prisoners who had served their purpose and were deprived of their life and labor. By taking a tough stance and obstructing the expansion of the HKB, the IG-Leitung succeeded in achieving a solution with the La

The SS management had to reach an agreement on a maximum sickness rate of five percent³⁴⁴. This put the SS under considerable pressure to act, as it would now have had to cover the costs of prisoners who were unable to work for long periods.

³⁴² StA Frankfurt a.M., investigative case 4 Js 798/64, p. 1422, statement Fischer, 22.2. 1966.

³⁴³ Nümbg. doc. NI-4830, Vitek statement, 3.3. 1947, p. 6. Vitek worked as a prisoner doctor in Monowitz after hard labor.

³⁴⁴ Nümbg. doc. NI-6190, Entress statement, April 14, 1947, p. 6.

Under these circumstances, SS site physician Wirths only saw the solution of "relieving" the HKB and the entire camp of prisoners who were no longer fit for work, as Fischer later stated: „The only way to achieve such relief was through selection, i.e. that the starting point for necessary selections was the deed of the inmates.

The problem was that the workforce needed for the Group was lost and new workers had to be brought in."³⁴⁵

After this basic "clarification", selections could be triggered in two different ways in the following months: The first, and more frequent, occurred when there were too many prisoners in the infirmary who were unfit for work. If the sickness rate rose above the aforementioned five percent, "the camp doctor had to make selections"³⁴⁶. In view of the still inadequate living and working conditions, segregation of weakened people became a regular occurrence: even the "ordinary" prisoners were therefore aware after a short time that the risk of falling victim to a selection was much higher in the HKB than in the rest of the camp. Those who were still able to walk to and from work under their own steam therefore tried not to enter the concentration camp despite their poor state of health. As a result, the proportion of prisoners who were actually able to work among those who were sent to work was constantly decreasing. A drop in labor productivity was thus inevitable.

Due to the deadline pressure on the construction site and the constant checks, the lack of efficiency could not be hidden for long. Not only the individual prisoners, but also the work detachments and companies were constantly measured against their specifications. If the prisoners' work performance was actually or supposedly poor, the foremen or masters complained to the IG labor deployment management. A letter of complaint was then sent via the management of IG Auschwitz to the SS commandant's office, which finally arranged a selection³⁴⁷. This second type of selection was used to check the entire inmate population for their suitability for work. It could be carried out in the morning when the prisoners marched out of the camp or as a "camp selection" on the roll call square. Selections of this kind often took place immediately after meetings between the SS and the IG, during which complaints about the prisoners' performance were discussed³⁴⁸. The yardstick for selection was obviously less the actual performance of the prisoners than whether they fell below the maximum quota of five percent. The bureaucratic fixation on the statistical level of sick leave meant that the SS doctors sometimes selected prisoners for gassing who would have been considered fit for work on another occasion³⁴⁹.

³⁴⁵ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ennittelungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 1422, statement by Fischer, February 22, 1966.

³⁴⁶ Nuremberg doc. NI-6 1 90, statement by Entress, 14.4. 1 947, p. 6.

³⁴⁷ Nuremberg doc. NI-7967, testimony Schulhof, 21 .6. 1 947, p. 4.

³⁴⁸ StA Frankfurt a.M., investigative case 4 Js 798/64, p. 1425, statement Fischer, 22.2. 1 966.

³⁴⁹ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ennittelungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 1 1 60, statement by Michel, February 25, 1971.

After the war, however, Fischer also reported on the efforts of the SS doctors to develop a standardized criteria scheme for selection over time. If the following illnesses or symptoms occurred, the prisoners concerned were at great risk of dying in the gas chambers at Birkenau: Hunger oedema, complete absence of fatty tissue in the buttocks, suspected TB (the actual infection was not detectable in Monowitz), broken bones and severe suppuration³⁵⁰. In practice, however, the SS doctors did not rigidly follow this catalog. If the sickness rate was at a comparatively low level, patients with serious injuries or serious illnesses also had a certain chance of remaining in the infirmary for longer than a fortnight. This was particularly the case when the supply of prisoners faltered due to the changing war situation or transportation problems. Non-medical aspects also played a role: depending on a prisoner's status within the camp hierarchy, the criteria were interpreted rigorously or generously. If a prisoner had special professional qualifications, this could also have a positive influence on his chances of treatment and recovery.

Selection procedure

The sickness rate in the Monowitz camp was continuously recorded on lists in the prisoners' infirmary. The prisoner scribes were therefore able to quickly determine an increase in the number of sick prisoners above five percent. This was initially internal information in the **HKB**, which only reached the IG and the SS after a certain delay. If the rate threatened to rise above the threshold, the inmate doctors still had the opportunity to bring it back below the critical margin by releasing relatively slightly injured HKB inmates or those who had almost recovered. By working together with prisoner functionaries in the "Labor Deployment Department", some of these prisoners could, for example, be transferred to "light commandos" for a transitional period³⁵¹. If this was successful, there was no need to fear selection at first. If the number of sick people was still too high despite these releases, "a very characteristic situation" arose in the HKB: the prisoners spoke of "thick air"³⁵². This was followed by the so-called doctor's presentation, which consisted of the medical service grade³⁵³ (SDG) Neubert and the camp elder of the infirmary, Buthner, checking all patients on the basis of their sick cards. These contained the name, prisoner number and fever curve,

³⁵⁰ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 1425, Aussage Fischer, 22.2. 1966. The information in the HKB Monowitz book (Nümbg. Dok. NI- 14997) also shows the diagnosis of more than two thirds of those selected. In the document Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 5299, statement Ungar, 10.5. 1948, p. 2, there is a list of the diseases; cf. also Table 2 in the appendix.

³⁵¹ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 409, statement Worgul, 19.6. 1969.

³⁵² StA Frankfurt a.M., investigative case 4 Js 798/64, p. 1233, statement by Marek, June 22, 1971.

³⁵³ The SS man who performed nursing and disciplinary duties in the infirmary was referred to as a "medical orderly". Due to the sporadic presence of the SS doctors, the SDG often acted in their place. For the inmate doctors and patients, he had a decisive influence on the conditions in the infirmary, not only in disciplinary matters.

Pulse and diagnosis noted³⁵⁴. If, in the opinion of Buthner or Neubert, a patient was eligible for selection, they retained his card.

The "actual" selection then began with the call of the respective block leader: "Attention". The SS doctor, the camp elder KB, the SDG, the block doctor and a prisoner clerk then entered the block. The entire delegation then went to the beds of the patients who had already been registered. Once there, Fischer and Buthner looked at the sick card together, had the blanket opened and consulted the block doctor if necessary. If the doctors agreed on a favorable prognosis that would lead to the prisoner being able to work again within a maximum of 14 days, they hung the sick card back on the bed. If, on the other hand, the doctors diagnosed a longer period of therapy or even a permanent loss of ability to work, they indicated this with a brief gesture to the prisoner's clerk, who then made a note on the sickness card. The entire "visit", as this sorting out for murder in the gas chambers was called in HKB jargon³⁵⁵, usually lasted between 20 and 30 minutes. Of the approximately 150 to 200 patients per block, however, the doctors usually only "examined" the 20 or 30 who were eligible for selection on the basis of the pre-selection. After the block elder had announced the end of the "ward round" with another "Attention", on average at least ten beds per block had no more sick cards on them. These prisoners then waited in the rest block or in the camp nursery for their transport to Birkenau³⁵⁶.

The selections in the camp's residential blocks followed a somewhat similar pattern. As a rule, they took place after the end of work or on a non-working Sunday so that the IG did not lose any work. The signal for the start of the selection came with the ringing of the bell: the same sound that woke the prisoners every morning meant "Blocksperr" during the day³⁵⁷. No prisoner, with the exception of a few functional prisoners, was then allowed to leave their block. The block elders and their assistants prepared the selection in the blocks. They gave each prisoner a slip of paper with their number, name, occupation, age and nationality and ordered them to undress completely except for their shoes. As soon as the noise of commando shouts and the screams of beaten prisoners approached the respective block, the block elders herded all the prisoners into the "day room", which was only four by seven meters in size and was otherwise reserved for the functional prisoners. After they had forced the 200 or more block inmates into this room, they locked the door to the large dormitory. After a while, the door opposite opened to the outside, where the selection committee was waiting.

Here, too, the SS camp doctor was in charge, accompanied by the "camp elder KB", the SDG, the respective block elder and a scribe. The procedure here was as follows

³⁵⁴ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 1 156, statement by Michel, February 25, 1971.

³⁵⁵ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 1 267, statement by Neubert, July 21, 1971.

³⁵⁶ StA Frankfurt a.M., Investigation case 4 Js 798/64, p. 1 156 f., Michel statement, February 25, 1971.

³⁵⁷ Cf. on this and the following Levi, Mensch, p. 132 ff.

However, this was done in reverse order, because unlike the infirmary, the prisoners were able-bodied: they had to walk past the commission one after the other, completely naked. Each individual prisoner had to stop in front of the doctors, hand in his slip of paper and turn around once so that his buttocks could be examined³⁵⁸, and then walk on. So as not to spread "unnecessary" unrest in the blocks of flats, the SS doctor had the Num The prisoners who were "unfit for work" were only written down "when they could no longer hear it"³⁵⁹.

The experienced prisoners nevertheless tried to catch a glimpse of where the SOG had given their note while they were still walking back to the block³⁶⁰. As a rule, the scribe created two piles of prisoner cards, one for the prisoners fit for work and one for the prisoners "condemned" to death by gas. After the end of the selection, which usually only lasted a few minutes, heated discussions began in the block about which side would ultimately mean life and which death for the respective prisoners. It was not always possible to make a clear decision, as the selection committee's criteria were not clearly defined. It could therefore happen that a prisoner who had already been given up by his comrades remained in the block, while a comparatively healthy one was selected. Final clarity was usually only achieved after one or two days, when a prisoner recorder from the Rapportführer called out the numbers noted during the roll call and the SS then took the prisoners to Birkenau in a truck.

A general camp selection on the roll call square looked somewhat different. First, all the camp inmates had to line up in rows, only to be superficially assessed for their state of health in a similar way to the blocks. While the "old" inmates understood the actual purpose of such a procedure, the SS doctors tried to deceive the new arrivals. They therefore pretended to take the weak prisoners to a better camp for "recuperation". Those who were in need of rest in the hope of a less strenuous command or were actually unfit for work saw their hopes quickly fade on the subsequent short journey: "The recuperation cure looked like this," a survivor of Monowitz later reported, "that they were transported on trucks. which, within 3 hours, brought back all the clothes of those already delivered to the gas chambers." ³⁶¹

The bearing selections were made in blocks. It is possible that They are therefore identical to the selections in front of Block 4, as described by various prisoners³⁶². This block faced the roll call area, which is why some reports also speak of a roll call area selection. The camp

³⁵⁸ The fat pads on the buttocks remain intact for the longest time in the event of extreme weight loss; if they regress, there is usually no chance of survival.

³⁵⁹ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ennittelungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 593, statement Schmid, 1. 12.1 1969.

³⁶⁰ Cf. Levi, Mensch, p. 134 f.

³⁶¹ StA Frankfurt a.M., criminal case 4 Ks 2/63, folder 16, statement Markowitsch, 4.2. 1965.

³⁶² StA Frankfurt a.M., Ennittelungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 384, Löwenstein statement, 3.6.1 1969.

The oldest prisoner or the camp kapo had the task of having the prisoners to be selected line up in front of Block 4, separated into blocks. When it was the turn of a block, all the prisoners had to walk one after the other - in the order of the block card index - about 50 meters at a running pace along Block 4. The medical committee described above made an assessment of the prisoner's ability to work. If this was negative, the prisoner's file card was removed from the block file. Even during these selections

The entire camp was block-locked, i.e. all prisoners not ordered to report for duty were not allowed to leave their block³⁶³.

Selections could also take place in the morning when the prisoners marched out to work in the Buna factories; this only seems to have happened once when the prisoners marched in in the evening³⁶⁴. This was usually triggered by complaints from the IG about the prisoners' poor work performance. In one such case, the labor detachment leader and the SS camp doctor approached the prisoners as the commandos were moving out.

The prisoners were marched to the gate in the presence of the Rapportführer and the camp elder. From the prisoners marching in rows of five, "the bad-looking or sick prisoners were taken out and transported away"³⁶⁵. According to consistent reports, high-ranking employees of IG Auschwitz were often present during these selections, including factory manager Dürrfeld on several occasions³⁶⁶. While they were only indirectly involved in the other types of selection through their complaints to the camp management, the managers were directly involved in the selection process for the gate selections. Apparently, they wanted to ensure that the

The "right" prisoners were segregated in order to bring the performance level in the work detachments back up to the desired level.

Victims of the selections

In principle, therefore, no prisoner in Monowitz was protected from selection; the various types of selection affected all areas of the camp with varying frequency. The risk of dying in the gas chambers of Birkenau was, of course, not evenly distributed among the various prisoner groups. In contrast to the ordinary inmates, prisoner functionaries and commandos generally did not have to fear the selections.

In the Monowitz camp, it was therefore mainly Jewish prisoners who fell victim to the selections. There were various reasons for this: Firstly, they made up the vast majority of the people housed in Monowitz³⁶⁷. Although their proportion was not constant during the camp's existence, it was probably also high in the early days.

³⁶³ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 384 f., statement by Löwenstein, June 3, 1969.

³⁶⁴ Nuremberg Doc. NI- 1 1695, statement of Dales, July 17, 1947, p. 3.

³⁶⁵ Nuremberg doc. NI-5847, statement Epstein, 3.3.1 947, p. 4, and Nümbg. doc. NI-7967, Schulhof statement, 21.6. 1947, p. 4, also Nuremberg Doc. NI-4828, Stern testimony, 1.3. 1 947, p. 3.

³⁶⁶ Nuremberg doc. NI- 1 0824, statement Kohn, May 29, 1 947, p. 4, also Nuremberg doc. NI-4828, Stern statement, 1.3. 1947, S. 3.

³⁶⁷ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 15 15, „Beschuß in der Sache Buthner“, 12.9.1975.

never have been below 70 percent³⁶⁸. After the continuous arrival of deportation transports at the beginning of 1943, nine out of ten prisoners in Monowitz were probably Jewish. Shortly before the evacuation of the camp, their share finally amounted to 93 percent³⁶⁹. Secondly, Jewish prisoners suffered the most from the poor supply situation. At first, they were not allowed to receive parcels from outside, and later there were no relatives left who could have sent them anything.

Non-Jewish prisoners, on the other hand, could receive a monthly parcel containing food and extra clothing³⁷⁰. Within this group, prisoners of Polish nationality benefited in particular, as they were still able to maintain the strongest links with relatives and friends due to their geographical location. While the (non-Jewish) Poles suffered many deaths from exhaustion, but also from mishandling and shootings, especially until the end of 1941, they occupied a comparatively privileged position within the camp hierarchy in Monowitz from the very beginning, as one former inmate recalls: "The fact that very few or almost no Poles were selected is quite true, as the Poles were much better fed than the others because they regularly received food parcels from home."³⁷¹ Camp inmates who had additional food at their disposal in this way therefore had a considerably lower risk of being selected due to physical deterioration. In addition, Jewish prisoners also suffered anti-Semitic harassment in the workplace. A large proportion of the civilian staff participated in this discrimination by making Jews do particularly strenuous or dangerous work, insulting or abusing them. All this drained their mental and physical reserves and increased the risk of being selected.

The racial ideological conviction shaped the approach of the camp organizers. In any case, the SS administration in Monowitz was more important than economic considerations: even if an SS doctor had placed a non-Jewish prisoner on the selection list, he was not normally transferred to Birkenau. Instead, the Political Department of the camp SS, which was responsible for the composition and security of the transports to Birkenau, usually removed all non-Jewish prisoners from the selection list³⁷². Due to the constantly increasing proportion of Jewish prisoners, there was apparently no longer any interest in gassing German or Polish prisoners³⁷³. The longer the extermination machinery for the extermination of the Jews of Europe ran, the less the SS's approach was aimed at separating out those who were actually unfit for work. The original economic

³⁶⁸ This is the lowest percentage given by witnesses. Nümbg. doc. NI-9808, Posener testimony, 3.6.1947.

³⁶⁹ Cf. Czech, Kalendarium, p. 960.

³⁷⁰ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 593a, statement Schmid, 1.12.1969.

³⁷¹ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 488, statement by Kaplan, 4.8.1969.

³⁷² StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 431, Waitz statement, 2.7.1969.

³⁷³ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 423, statement by Peiser, 30.6.1969.

The intention of maintaining the efficiency of the prisoner detachments increasingly took a back seat to the murder of the main ideological opponent. Although Jewish "Muselmänner" were still primarily selected, non-Jewish prisoners who should have been considered "unfit for work" according to the criteria were often nursed back to health by the SS doctors. As early as 1943, therefore, almost 100 percent of the prisoners selected in Monowitz were probably of Jewish descent.

On the other hand, a Jewish prisoner did not necessarily have to end up in the gas chamber. Those who belonged to a political group or the camp resistance could benefit from lighter work detachments, better clothing and food in a similar way to other prisoner functionaries. However, the chances of getting such a post were disproportionately lower for Jews. If a prisoner had no such connections and no skilled worker training that qualified him for a less strenuous job, his chances of leaving the Monowitz camp alive were extremely slim.

Frequency of selections

The absolute number of selections in Monowitz cannot be determined. The figures in the reports of former prisoners vary too widely. It is therefore only possible to attempt to determine an approximate frequency from the concurring statements of several witnesses or witnesses who were particularly reliable due to their function at the time. Another fundamental problem is that selections took place so often that only those on special occasions are remembered and hardly any details are remembered at all. The extensive lack of fixed points in time within the camp boundaries, which would have enabled the prisoners to chronologically classify the events, proves to be particularly problematic here.

In the prisoners' reports, the frequency of selections in the entire camp varies from only once during the camp's existence³⁷⁴ to four times a year³⁷⁵ to once a month³⁷⁶. The first statement, reported by two witnesses, probably refers to the last major selection before the gas chambers were blown up in October 1944. In terms of preparation and scope, this must have been the largest selection in Monowitz overall; the descriptions in this regard are correspondingly unanimous. The fact that both witnesses only remember this one camp selection could have something to do with their jobs in the camp. Both worked in the inmate infirmary, which was separated from the rest of the camp grounds by a fence and was located a considerable distance from the roll call area. The events in the camp could have

³⁷⁴ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 350, statement Halbreich, 24.4. 1 969; p. 1 462, statement Buthner, May 3, 1960.

³⁷⁵ StA Frankfurt a.M., Strafsache 4 Ks 2/63, Ordner 16, Aussage Markowitsch, 4.2. 1 965, Minister für Industrie der DDR. Nuremberg doc. NI- 1 0824, statement Kohn, May 29, 1 947, p. 5.

³⁷⁶ StA Frankfurt a.M., criminal case 4 Ks 2/63, folder 16, statement Frankenthal, 9.3. 1 964. Nürnberg. Doc. NI-7 1 84, statement Afrine, June 5, 1947, p. 3.

They were therefore not normally able to observe them directly. Regularly recurring events such as the selections did not stand out so much from everyday life in the camp that they would have learned anything about them from other prisoners.

In view of these circumstances, these statements appear negligible in comparison to those of other former prisoners. Two witnesses who reported camp selections every four weeks are particularly credible: As Buna workers assigned to the construction site, they did not experience the sometimes daily selections in the infirmary themselves, as they actually only had to take part in camp selections. It seems possible that they did not differentiate between selections on the roll call square and in the barracks. Of the two witnesses who speak of a quarterly cycle of camp selections, one states that selections took place in the "camp blocks" every three months³⁷⁷. Assuming that there were also selections on the roll call square, these three statements are consistent. Yet another witness speaks of camp selections "from time to time, approximately every three months"³⁷⁸. The vagueness of his statement could again be due to his work in the infirmary, which allowed him to follow the events in the rest of the camp only from a distance. Presumably, therefore, inspections of the entire Monowitz camp took place approximately every four to six weeks, or at least every three months. This usually took place on a work-free Sunday before lunch³⁷⁹. Selections when the prisoners marched out to work, on the other hand, took place at irregular intervals. Following complaints from companies about inadequate work performance, a selection committee posted at the camp gate sometimes took people from the prisoner ranks every day for weeks on end who no longer appeared fit for work³⁸⁰. If the level of performance had then risen sufficiently in the eyes of the IG-Bau management, such selections could be stopped altogether for a while.

The assessment of the conditions in the inmate infirmary again depends on the respective perspective of the witnesses. The classification of the testimonies is made more difficult by the fact that two witnesses divided the HKB selections into "large" and "small" and "small".

^{tion381} Both were members of the medical staff and therefore possibly reported a differentiation that was not recognizable as such to the rest of the witnesses. For the "ordinary" prisoners did not normally have any Information about the reason for a selection. Leaving this differentiation of the HKB selections aside for the time being, there is still a fluctuation range between about once every six weeks³⁸² and several times a week³⁸³, in a

³⁷⁷ Nümbg. doc. NI-10824, Kohn statement, 29.5.1947.

³⁷⁸ StA Frankfurt a.M., criminal case 4 Ks 2/63, folder 16, statement Markowitsch, 4.2.1965.

³⁷⁹ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 168, statement by Machala, 30.9.1966; StA Frankfurt a.M., criminal case 4 Ks 2/63, folder 16, statement Frankenthal, 9.3.1964.

³⁸⁰ Nümbg. doc. NI-4828, Stern statement, 1.3.1947, p. 3.

³⁸¹ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 1462 ff., statement Buthner, 3.5.1960; p. 184, statement Niedojadlo, September 24, 1966.

³⁸² StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 597, statement by Cuenca, 30.10.1969.

³⁸³ Thus in Nümbg. doc. NI-10824, Kohn statement; Nümbg. doc. NI-9808, statement by Posener. StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 157, statement by Kujawa, 26.9.1966; *ibid*, p. 350, Halbreich statement, April 24, 1969; *ibid*, p. 114, Diamant statement, February 23, 1971.

In some cases up to daily³⁸⁴. The lowest selection frequency must be assumed to be once every 14 days, as this information comes from the SS doctor in charge, Fischer³⁸⁵, from whom no excessively high figure can be expected. On average, selections in the HKB probably took place about once a week; this figure is mentioned most frequently in the prisoners' reports. Deviations upwards, up to daily, or downwards, up to fortnightly selections, are to be assumed. Such fluctuations can be attributed to seasonal changes in external conditions, among other things. The continental climate caused extreme temperature differences over the two years of the camp's existence. The summer heat tormented the prisoners because there was not enough drinkable water. But the lack of warm clothing in winter hit them much harder, so that a correspondingly higher number of workers were unable to work due to exhaustion or frostbite, many hundreds on some evenings.

It is noteworthy that the camp elder of the HKB, the "chief physician" Buthner, stated a comparatively very low number of selections. He only corrected the figures slightly upwards when asked. In addition to his desire not to burden himself unnecessarily, the reason for this can probably be found in Buthner's particular work ethic. On his own initiative, he always tried to keep the sickness rate as low as possible in order to avoid "major" selections by the SS. This was achieved, for example, by rigorously observing the admission guidelines for the HKB, according to which only prisoners who could be cured within 14 days were to be accepted from the outset. Buthner obviously hoped that this would slightly increase the chances of recovery for those admitted, as his staff could then spread the scarce treatment resources over fewer heads. At the same time, this principle of concentrating resources often meant a death sentence for those turned away. Prisoners who had initially been admitted by the ambulance nurses but who, in the judgment of Buthner and his assistants, had no prospect of recovery, were often sent to the "protection block". There, the sick no longer received any medical care, but simply waited to be transported to Birkenau. The vast majority of prisoners probably also regarded this procedure as a selection.

'Number of selected persons

The question of how many inmates were transferred to Birkenau for gassing in the individual selections and in total poses similar problems to the previous question of frequency. There are not even exact figures for the most precisely reconstructable, the last "big" selection before the gas chambers in Birkenau were blown up. The figures vary between 200 and 800³⁸⁶ prisoners selected as unfit for work³⁸⁷. The majority of the reports

³⁸⁴ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 1155, statement by Michel, 25.2.1971.

³⁸⁵ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 1425, statement by Fischer, February 22, 1966. Fischer admits that further selections probably took place under the supervision of SDG Neubert.

however, gives a figure of around 300 victims. The prisoners' memoirs contain only rough estimates of other individual camp selections, which are not related to a specific incident. In the memories of the former prisoners, the individual selections can usually no longer be distinguished from one another, as they always took place in the same way with a certain regularity. Moreover, the prisoners, who were shielded from the outside world, were generally unable to link a selection to a specific date or even to another significant event outside the camp. The usual experience of time, shaped by the calendar and newspapers, was to a certain extent suspended in the camp. Consequently, the following information cannot claim to be accurate for every single selection. Nevertheless, they are likely to give a correct picture of the general selection practice of the SS in the Monowitz camp.

During selections at the camp gate while the prisoners were being marched out, the medical commission usually held back 40 to 50 prisoners, who were then subjected to a brief examination. On average, it separated between 20 and 30 people for direct transfer to Birkenau³⁸⁸. Again, there are widely differing figures for the sick bay: Up to 200 or 300 prisoners allegedly fell victim to the "large" selections there, whose ability to work in the opinion of the investigating commission could not be restored in the short term³⁸⁹. SS doctor Fischer, on the other hand, stated that on average he selected between 20 and 50 people every 14 days³⁹⁰. As in the case of the frequency, his statement probably also marks the lowest limit in this case. In the more frequent "small" selections, around 10 prisoners are said to have been selected at a time³⁹¹. The plausibility of these witness reports can be checked on the basis of contemporary information from the **HKB** office, which allows a reasonably reliable estimate of the number of prisoners actually selected.

After the end of the war, transfer lists from the infirmary that prisoners had been able to hide or that had not been destroyed during the evacuation were found on the grounds of the Monowitz camp. The records include 7,295 names of prisoners transferred by the SS from Monowitz **HKB** to Auschwitz or Birkenau between November 1, 1942 and September 1944³⁹².

³⁸⁸ Nümbg. doc. NI-4828, Stern statement, 1.3. 1947, p. 3.

³⁸⁹ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 1462, statement by Buthner, 3.5.1 1960; *ibid.*, p. 1114, Diamond statement, 23.2. 1971.

³⁹⁰ StA Frankfurt a.M., investigative case 4 Js 798/64, p. 1425, statement Fischer, 22.2. 1966.

³⁹¹ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 1465, statement by Buthner, May 3, 1960.

³⁹² Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 4997, HKB-Monowitz-Buch. On the figures: Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 5299, Stel Ungar, 10.5. 1948, p. 1 f.

It is not possible to say with certainty whether this compilation, which covers almost the entire duration of the Monowitz camp's existence, is complete for this period³⁹³. However, for some months for which, judging by the consecutive date, complete data is available, statements can be made about the frequency and extent of selections. The transfer destination Auschwitz mentioned in this document for the first few months can be explained by the fact that at this time all serious cases of illness were transferred from the Monowitz **concentration camp**, which was still barely functional, to Auschwitz. It can be assumed that a very high percentage of these prisoners were transferred from Auschwitz to Birkenau and murdered there³⁹⁴.

One month from the initial phase of the camp, December 1942, and one from the "wedding" shortly before the arrival of the Hungarian Jews in Monowitz, May 1944, may serve as examples. The following can be said about the first month

Draw picture: Prisoners were transferred on 20 days, including eight days with less than 10 and seven days with more than 30, of which 84 people were transferred on one day alone³⁹⁵. In total, the SS doctor sent at least 457 (478 minus 21 provisions) people to Auschwitz, who presumably died in the gas chambers of Birkenau within the following days. There is no evidence that prisoners were transferred to Auschwitz in this month for whom there was no "medical" indication. According to the list, the SS arranged transfers on only three days in May 1944, in each case at intervals of ten to 14 days. In total, the SS trucks transported 29 prisoners to Birkenau, once 30, once 80 and once 161, although it should be noted that the Monowitz camp had doubled in size in the meantime.

These absolute figures fit well into the picture that emerges from many testimonies, which speak for certain phases of daily selections, while otherwise a rhythm of one to two weeks prevailed. Added to this are the seasonal fluctuations: December 1942 was probably a typical winter month, with considerably more renditions than a spring or summer month. The cold, wet weather, inadequate clothing and lack of protective equipment generally resulted in many cases of frostbite and pneumonia, which, as described above, were almost impossible to treat. In May 1944, in addition to the milder climatic conditions, the change in the war situation and the working conditions, which were now somewhat more geared to economic requirements, may have resulted in a comparatively low selection rate. Arbitrary maltreatment, which led to the loss of work or even death of prisoners, only occurred in exceptional cases at this time. Moreover, in

³⁹³ The reliability of this document is difficult to establish. In view of the frequently reported manipulations in the hospital office in order to keep prisoners in need of treatment in the infirmary for longer than the permitted two weeks, calculations such as those made by Makowski, *Organization*, p. 144 ff. appear to be speculative. Piper, *Arbeitseinsatz*, p. 285 ff., however, adopts Makowski's percentages regarding the length of time spent in the infirmary without any consideration.

³⁹⁴ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 5299, statement by Ungar, April 30, 1947. nümbg. doc. NI- 1 5295, Statement Sehn, 29.4.1948, S. 69.

³⁹⁵ On this and the following Nuremberg doc. NI- 1 4997, HKB-Monowitz-Buch; also Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 5299.

in the preceding months, only an unusually small number of transports reached Auschwitz³⁹⁶. The "prisoner commodity" was therefore not available to any great extent in May 1 944. This was not to change fundamentally until the end of the month.

The total number of 7,295 selected prisoners in this document refers only to transfers from Monowitz concentration camp³⁹⁷. Selections of the entire warehouse or at the warehouse gate are not included, nor are those in the warehouse, at the prisoners who died in the **HKB**³⁹⁸. The figure of 20,000 to 25,000 deaths³⁹⁹ in the Monowitz camp generally assumed in the literature is therefore not called into question. How long the selection process lasted in the Monowitz camp, cannot be clearly determined. However, it can be assumed that the "great" selection led by SS doctor König in October 1 944 before the gas chambers were blown up was in fact the last selection on a larger scale⁴⁰⁰.

The apparently very formative effect on many witnesses also suggests this conclusion. For the period from October 1 944, there are reports of a decreasing number⁴⁰¹ or the end of the selections⁴⁰².

³⁹⁶ While an average of almost 30,000 people were deported to Auschwitz in each of the four months preceding December 1942, and even over 1,20,000 in each of the four months from May to August 1944 during the "Hungarian Action", the figures for the months of January to April 1944 were comparatively low at around 6,000 each; see Piper, *Zahl der Opfer*, p. 144 f.

³⁹⁷ Nuremberg Doc. NI-15299, statement by Ungar, after April 30, 1948, p. 1 f. The total number of prisoners transferred varies somewhat; Makowski, *Organization*, pp. 139, 181, assumes 6,984 (transfer list) or 7,175 (diagram); if the two months from 1942 are added, the number increases by 840. Makowski's interpretation that the lower number of transfers in 1944 (2,285 and 2,529 respectively) compared to 1943 (4,890 and 4,455 respectively) is due to the "intensive treatment by the prisoners' health service" is not convincing. In view of the escalating supply situation and the increase in the number of prisoners, it seems very likely that the files received are either incomplete or that certain selections were not even registered in this form.

³⁹⁸ The number of prisoners who died in the camp, on the IG construction site or in the infirmary amounted to 1,647 according to Nuremberg Doc. NI-15295, Monowitz death book, 1,647 prisoners. It cannot be determined whether this document, which was found after the liberation and secretly recorded by prisoners, actually includes all those who died between November 16, 1942 and January 15, 1945.

³⁹⁹ The credible figures range from 20,000 (Nuremberg doc. NI-11046) to 23,000 (Nuremberg doc. NI-12070), 25,000 (Nuremberg doc. NI-7967) and up to 30,000 dead (Nuremberg doc. NI-11686). SS doctor Fischer assumes 10,000 for the time of his presence in Monowitz, StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 1425, Feb. 22, 1966. NI- 1 2069, statement Herzog, October 21, 1947, there is no evidence in the other sources for the figure of 120,000 dead; the same applies to the claim in Nümbg. doc. NI-11081, statement by Zlotolow, September 2, 1947, that 40,000 prisoners died during work in the Buna factories alone.

⁴⁰⁰ Nuremberg Doc. NI-1108 1, testimony Zlotolow, 2.9.1947. Frankfurt a.M. District Court, investigative case 4 Js 798/64, p. 430, Waitz statement, July 2, 1969.

⁴⁰¹ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 1160, statement by Michel, February 25, 1971.

⁴⁰² StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 571a, Aussage Rausch, 4.11.1969. Rausch's statements are contradictory, however, since in another statement, *ibid.*, p. 40, he says that selection continued in Monowitz even after the end of the gassings.

Ways to avoid selection

If the SS doctor ordered a selection, "this was often known to the prisoner functionaries [...]"⁴⁰³. In most cases, the information came from the prisoner clerks in the Political Department or the Labor Deployment Office. Due to the hierarchical structure of the "prisoner self-administration", this information was passed on to other high-ranking prisoner functionaries and also reached the **HKB** in particular. If selections took place in the infirmary, prisoners who had relationships with prisoner functionaries could be protected from selection relatively easily: Those who only had a minor injury or were almost recovered were "made healthy".

and was returned to the camp, where he was safe from selection for **HKB**⁴⁰⁴. If the patient still required further treatment, he could be taken back to the **HKB** after the selection was over. Well-trained prisoners who were too weak to return to their work detachment but were able to walk had the opportunity to do clerical work in the **HKB** or to fill in as assistant nurses. Although they had to work, as members of the **HKB** staff they had good prospects of returning to the camp despite their health problems.

selection. It was more difficult with long-term bedridden patients. The only possibility here was to deceive the SS doctor by giving a false prognosis and frequently moving the prisoner to another bed⁴⁰⁵. Finally, patients whose illness or injury made them a medically interesting case were also given a chance. Ordinary prisoners could also benefit from the professional ambition of the SS doctors (and prisoner doctors) who wanted to prove what was medically possible in the infirmary of a concentration camp. However, such showcase patients ran the risk of being

to be selected after the critical phase if they required a long but medically uninteresting recovery phase⁴⁰⁶.

Once the SS doctor had selected a prisoner as unfit for work, he had This meant that his chances of survival were slim. If he had urgently needed training as a skilled worker, the intervention of the company employing him⁴⁰⁷ or the intervention of the labor deployment department⁴⁰⁸ could lead to his removal from the list. According to the available files, however, the companies only made use of this option in very isolated cases. For prisoners in whom one of the influential national or political groups in the camp had an interest, there were other prospects of rescue. In principle, it was possible to deceive the SS doctor: On the one hand, this could be done by bribing

⁴⁰³ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 1041, statement by Schmidt, March 9, 1971.

⁴⁰⁴ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 409, statement Worgul, 19.6. 1 969; p. 1233, statement Marek, 22.6. 1 971.

⁴⁰⁵ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 178, statement by Jaworski, 20.9. 1 966.

⁴⁰⁶ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 1 255, statement by Samuelides, June 29, 1971.

⁴⁰⁷ Nümbg. doc. NI-71 84, Afrine statement, 5.6.1 947, p. 2.

⁴⁰⁸ However, the SS doctors already followed the instruction not to employ chemists and other skilled workers. to select. StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 35, statement Betlen, 20. 1.1 966.

of the responsible SDG Neubert, who was open to such lucrative requests⁴⁰⁹. On the other hand, this could also be achieved by exchanging the prisoner's file card for that of a dead person⁴¹⁰, but this was a very insecure and not always feasible. In any case, however, it was necessary for someone, usually a functional prisoner, to stand up for the person in question⁴¹¹.

The functionaries' scope of influence was therefore potentially very broad; in this respect, too, they could make the difference between life and death. Nevertheless, their room for maneuver should not be overestimated: Any such intervention was associated with a considerable risk and was therefore only possible in a few exceptional cases. Otherwise, the interventions in the camp doctor's selection list or the increasing number of invalids in the camp would have attracted attention.

Selection as a basic principle at HKB

The danger of selection was omnipresent in the Monowitz camp: it shaped the experience of the ordinary prisoners at all times and in all places, whether in the camp or on the construction site. The SS and IG employees constantly reminded them that their right to life was based solely on their ability to work. Apart from promotion within the prisoner hierarchy, there was no way of escaping this permanent selection pressure. Due to the strict requirements of the IG-Bau management, the infirmary, which was supposed to offer the prisoners healing and recreation, became the central place of selection in Monowitz. This was not limited to the selection of those unfit for work for gassing in Birkenau.

In a broader sense, every medical activity in Monowitz concentration camp was based on a permanent selection of prisoners. The primary task of the doctors here was not to treat their inmate comrades, but to solve the question of who should benefit from the few available medicines and other treatment options. Managing this shortage meant deciding in each individual case whether a prisoner should be admitted and treated or denied the necessary help. This situation was predetermined by the SS due to the layout of the concentration camps. The inevitable exclusion of many prisoners from treatment, which could mean death for them, was therefore not the responsibility of the prisoner doctors. On the contrary, as far as possible they tried to make additional treatment methods and medicines available for the infirmary. Under the camp conditions, the prisoner doctors could therefore only violate ethical standards when selecting the patients to be treated. The problems they faced and the criteria they used to do so were attempted to be explained.

⁴⁰⁹ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 1112, statement by Diamant, February 23, 1971; *ibid.*, p. 422,

¹⁹⁶⁹ Peiser statement, June 30, 1969, p. 31. 7. 1969; *ibid.* p. 27, Aus

⁴¹⁰ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 495, statement Tra sage Stasiak, 2. 12. 1964.

⁴¹¹ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 593, statement by Schmid, December 1, 1969.

one of the former doctors put into words: "What was discussed here with regard to the distribution of medicines also applied, *mutatis mutandum*, to all other areas, e.g. the provision of easier work, a food allowance, etc.. In all these cases, a selection principle almost always had to be applied. This selection, which I would describe as positive because it always had the purpose of saving lives, could also be based on other factors: Family affiliation, friendship, racial, national and political affinity and finally the social or cultural value of the sick person: should the life of a scholar be valued in the same way as that of a manual laborer?"⁴¹²

What Drohocki retrospectively described as "positive selection" was a necessary decision in the interests of the prisoner community. In order to achieve the greatest possible effect with the scarce material, the drugs had to be given to those who would benefit most from them. However, the medical judgment had to take into account not only the purely medical aspects, such as a good chance of survival, but also camp-specific aspects such as whether the patient had a chance of being "fit for work" again within 14 days. The circumstances of the decision inevitably led to results that cannot stand up to subsequent review. Problems arise, however, where family affiliation or other "affinities" played a role in the decision. A prisoner doctor who, for example, only selected Jews and excluded them from treatment because of his anti-Semitic views, would probably have been guilty in the eyes of his fellow prisoners even under the exceptional circumstances of a concentration camp. To use Drohocki's terminology, he would not have made a "positive selection", but would have abused his decision-making power to satisfy his ideological needs.

Participation of prisoner doctors in HKB selections

Under the conditions prevailing in Monowitz, therefore, all medical activity was determined by the compulsion to classify patients according to their suitability for treatment. In many cases, the decision for or against an attempt at therapy was tantamount to a decision on the life or death of a prisoner, so that the camp doctors were permanently exposed to enormous psychological stress. Their most difficult task, however, was probably their involvement in the "actual" selections, in which the SS doctor in the infirmary chose the prisoners who were to be sent to the gas chambers in Birkenau. Although, in theory, the SS doctor or the SDG had the sole power to decide on this question, the situation was more complicated in practice.

The SS doctors responsible for Monowitz were not permanently present in the camp. They lived in the town of Auschwitz and only visited the HKB about once or twice a week. They therefore had little knowledge of the prisoners' state of health when they came to the camp for the scheduled selections.

⁴¹² StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 229 f., statement by Drohocki, July 22, 1968.

came. The block doctors therefore had to participate in some way if they wanted to avoid this short "ward round" being carried out according to largely arbitrary impressions. Only they had the detailed knowledge to make a reasonably well-founded assessment of a patient's medical chances. In order not to endanger survivable prisoners, they were forced to hand over some of those they considered "doomed to die" for transfer to Birkenau. In doing so, they made themselves helpers of the SS doctor, because without the help of the prisoner doctors, selections using this method would not have been possible⁴¹³. However, if they had shirked their responsibility altogether, the selection quota set by the SS would probably have been fulfilled with considerably greater arbitrariness. Their assistance was therefore probably in the interests of the prisoner community. However, the way in which the individual prisoner doctors participated in the selection of the so-called unfit for work varied considerably. This is illustrated by the course of the last major selection in the Monowitz camp in October 1944.

The reason for this selection was apparently the imminent destruction of the gas chambers in Birkenau. The SS leadership therefore wanted to "liberate" the Monowitz camp from those unfit for work on a large scale for the last time⁴¹⁴. The camp elder of the infirmary, Buthner, was responsible for the preparations in the camp. He therefore instructed three Polish and three Jewish prisoner doctors to carry out "preliminary selections" in the approximately 50 accommodation blocks. While the Polish doctors drew up a list of 600 names from the accommodation they had inspected, Buthner only received blank sheets from the Jewish doctors. They refused to take responsibility for sending hundreds of people to certain death. According to the available memoirs, the SOG and the camp elder of the HKB then insulted the Jewish prisoner doctors as "saboteurs": Buthner had obviously already largely identified with his selection work in the service of the SS. However, due to the large number of those unfit for work selected by the Polish doctors, Buthner initially contented himself with bringing these 600 to the HKB for final selection. His fears that he had not sufficiently fulfilled his duty as "camp elder HKB" proved unfounded when the SS doctor arrived. According to König's⁴¹⁵ instructions, "only" 300 "unfit for work" prisoners had to be brought to Birkenau anyway.

However, Buthner's reaction makes it clear how different a decision-making situation could be for the block doctors on the one hand and the camp elder of the HKB on the other. Buthner was personally responsible for the "functioning" of the infirmary in Monowitz. If the inmate doctors refused to cooperate with the SS, he was therefore called upon to do so himself: A refusal that

⁴¹³ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 339, statement by Unikower, April 15, 1969.

⁴¹⁴ On the following: StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 430, Waitz statement, July 2, 1969; p. 316, Lange statement, March 24, 1969; p. 1156 ff., Michel statement, February 25, 1971; p. 598, Cuenca statement, 30.10.1969.

⁴¹⁵ In the meantime, König had taken over the supervision of the infirmary in Monowitz from Fischer, who was in charge of all the subcamps of KL Auschwitz.

selection would probably have meant the end of his position as a storage tester. The block doctors, on the other hand, probably did not have much to fear, as they continued to be relied upon. Buthner therefore faced the general dilemma of the prisoner functionary to an incomparably greater extent as to how far he should get involved in cooperating with the SS. After all, he alone was responsible to the camp administration for the HKB. The way in which Buthner treaded the fine line between controlled cooperation with the SS for the benefit of the prisoners and mere complicity determined whether the HKB could offer the prisoners a chance of survival or was merely seen as a gateway to Birkenau.

From June 1943 until the evacuation in January 1945, a single person had an even greater influence on the living conditions of the prisoners in the infirmary of Monowitz than in the residential camp. In the following excursus on the camp elder of the HKB, Stefan Buthner, the difficult situation in which a prisoner functionary found himself as a mediator between the SS and the "masses" of prisoners will therefore be examined once again as an example. Although the inmate infirmary only comprised a small part of the camp, it is suitable for such an examination because it had become the center of the resistance organizations in Monowitz. The lines of conflict between the various prisoner groups, of which Buthner was the intersection, can therefore be traced particularly clearly in this section of the camp reality.

6. Excursus: The Buthner case

Stefan Buthner was born Stefan Budziaszek in Andrychow, Poland, in 1913⁴¹⁶. His family later moved to Auschwitz, where his father had been transferred as a director of the Polish Railways. After studying medicine in Krakow until 1939 and graduating without a doctorate, he became active in the Polish resistance against the German occupation. He was arrested by the Gestapo, who transferred him from prison to KL Auschwitz in February 1942. Buthner went through various work detachments there and in September of the same year was sent to the newly established Jawischowitz subcamp, where he set up the infirmary with two other doctors. His "achievements" were obviously impressive to the SS, as Buthner was specifically selected for his new position in Monowitz at an early stage. Despite his limited medical experience and incomplete specialist training, the young doctor Stefan Buthner also made an excellent impression on SS doctor Horst Fischer in Monowitz⁴¹⁷.

Buthner is unanimously described as a talented organizer who found it easy to implement sweeping changes according to his ideas⁴¹⁸. Such qualities seemed to be urgently needed by the SS leadership in the spring of 1943,

⁴¹⁶ On this and the following: StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 1 456 ff., statement by Buthner, May 3, 1960.

⁴¹⁷ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 1429, statement by Fischer, February 22, 1966.

⁴¹⁸ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 176 ff., statement by Jaworski, September 20, 1966.

to utilize the economic potential of inmate labor more efficiently than before. Buthner's "technical and organizational skills" therefore made him seem particularly suitable for the role of the new camp elder of the HKB in Monowitz⁴¹⁹. Thanks to his successful efforts to expand and better equip the HKB, he completely fulfilled the expectations placed in him. Buthner also succeeded in gaining the personal esteem of his direct superior Fischer by satisfying his professional interests. For example, Buthner set up "show operations" in which he allegedly demonstrated specifically Polish surgical methods. However, he is said to have performed these operations on the date agreed with Fischer even if there was no patient with the desired diagnosis in the infirmary. In one such case, Buthner allegedly performed the operation on completely debilitated prisoners, most of whom died shortly afterwards as a result of the operation⁴²⁰.

Buthner's tendency towards self-expression obviously coincided here with his thirst for knowledge. Compared to the other inmate doctors, he had far fewer qualifications and experience, which is probably why he welcomed any opportunity to satisfy his interest in further training. According to the available reports, he does indeed appear to have operated more than was necessary and answerable at times⁴²¹. The operating theater, which he was instrumental in setting up, is said to have been his greatest pride, in which he also allowed himself to get carried away with daring interventions⁴²². Even if the technical possibilities were available, complex stomach operations or even trepanations are unlikely to have helped the respective prisoners – regardless of the indication: Inadequate care facilities and hygiene conditions made the rapid recovery that was necessary in the camp completely illusory. Even if the operation was successful, the patient inevitably fell victim to the next selection.

Whether Buthner actually arbitrarily selected prisoners without a relevant diagnosis for such surgical demonstrations, however, is unclear. It is possible that these accusations are based on a lack of knowledge or misunderstandings. However, operations without medical indication did indeed take place in Monowitz. In the cases that can be clearly proven, however, Buthner carried them out with the consent of the prisoner concerned⁴²³. The purpose of such interventions was, for example, to protect the prisoner from an unwanted transfer to a dangerous external commando. Due to the high risk of being discovered, the doctor and patient kept the background as secret as possible, even from the nurses. Some witness reports that incriminate Buthner may therefore accurately describe the course of the operation, but appear in the wrong light without the appropriate context.

⁴¹⁹ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 1 429, statement Fischer, 22.2. 1 966.

⁴²⁰ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 1 94, statement by Lindenbaum, 1 0.4. 1 967.

⁴²¹ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 197 ff., statement by Posnanski, 12.4. 1 967.

⁴²² StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, excerpt from a book by Jaworski, p. 5.

⁴²³ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 245, statement mine, 20.5.1 968.

In any case, SS doctor Fischer kept Buthner in "good memory". Even during the selections, in which the "district elder" regularly took part, "no incorrect behavior" was noticed by his superior⁴²⁴. The SS was familiar with the Buthner's "achievements" to such an extent that they made him one of the few "honorary prisoners" of the Monowitz camp in 1944⁴²⁵. Such praise, which under the circumstances of civilian life would probably speak in favor of Buthner's qualifications as a doctor, must of course be viewed differently under camp conditions. It therefore remains to be examined whether a prisoner functionary, who was involved in the selections in a way that the SS men present could not find fault with, still sufficiently represented the interests of his fellow prisoners or had become a mere assistant to the SS.

Buthner from the prisoners' perspective

In the eyes of many prisoners, Buthner was overly committed to the interests of the camp administration⁴²⁶, and they even saw him as "the right-hand man of the SS"⁴²⁷. Another group of prisoners, on the other hand, saw him as a benefactor who had transformed the HKB into a "sanatorium"⁴²⁸. In order to get a clearer picture of the actual events in Monowitz, Buthner's activities must therefore be analyzed in more detail.

Buthner undoubtedly used the great authority he enjoyed with SS doctor Fischer and SDG Neubert for the benefit of the other camp inmates. The word of the

The "district elder", as the head of the infirmary was also known, was taken seriously in the camp: his intervention could therefore save a prisoner from selection even when his condition seemed hopeless. Among other things, the SS had given him a great deal of leeway to treat medically interesting cases, which he used at least in part. If the SS doctor was not personally present at a selection, which happened time and again, the actual decision lay with Buthner anyway, as the medically uneducated doctor had little knowledge of the subject. SDG Neubert is said to have relied entirely on his judgment⁴²⁹. In addition, he was inferior to Buthner's strong personality in every respect⁴³⁰.

In an unusually short time, Buthner had also succeeded in setting up an operating theater, expanding the accommodation facilities and bringing about a stronger orientation of the infirmary towards medical aspects⁴³¹. His good contacts with the SS undoubtedly facilitated these improvements. The posts of inmate doctors were made easier by his efforts.

⁴²⁴ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 1429, statement by Fischer, February 22, 1966.

⁴²⁵ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 1319, statement by Maneli, July 15, 1971.

⁴²⁶ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 1233 f., statement by Marek, June 22, 1971.

⁴²⁷ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 11 12, statement by Diamant, February 23, 1971.

⁴²⁸ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 28, statement by Stasiak, Dec. 2, 1964.

⁴²⁹ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 855, Aussage Kahn, 8.9.1970; *ibid.*, p. 48 f., Aussage Posnanski, 16.2. 1966.

⁴³⁰ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 11 12, statement by Diamant, February 23, 1971.

⁴³¹ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 148, statement by Makowski, September 14, 1966.

exclusively with trained physicians, in some cases with high-ranking international experts⁴³². His energetic commitment to the professionalization of the HKB was unanimously recognized by all sides, even by the management of IG Auschwitz⁴³³. Whether Buthner's undoubted merits actually proved to be profitable for all prisoners, as Drohocki believes⁴³⁴, can hardly be clearly determined.

For one group of prisoners, the reorganization of the HKB meant at least a temporary deterioration in their living conditions. Buthner's interventions in the personnel structure of the HKB were accompanied by a comprehensive change of nurses and doctors. Until the early summer of 1943, these posts were occupied almost exclusively by members of the Communist resistance group, very few of whom had any medical training. Their reaction was understandably unfriendly, as they lost their privileged position in the infirmary. In their eyes, Buthner's actions must have appeared to be directed against the communist-dominated prisoner self-administration, even though his reorganization had a positive effect on the majority of prisoners: a seriously ill prisoner would have preferred expert care, even if Buthner and his doctors were possibly less pleasant in character than some "red" prisoners.

Nevertheless, Buthner's reputation among the majority of prisoners was damaged after the restructuring of the HKB. The opinion leaders in the camp were still primarily the "communists" transferred from Buchenwald, who had suffered disadvantages as a result of the changes. Their attitude towards Buthner was confrontational from the outset. Even before he arrived in Monowitz, they had agreed to send an informer to the new Polish camp elder. In order to obtain as much information as possible from Buthner's immediate surroundings, the Jewish prisoner Lindenbaum took on the role of his personal informant. Of course, Buthner had already seen through this game within the first week and confronted the informant. It can be assumed that not only fine words were exchanged. Apart from verbal abuse and an arrest within the HKB, however, nothing happened to Lindenbaum. Compared to the camp's usual treatment of exposed informers, Buthner behaved very cautiously. In his former calf factor, however, he had gained an enemy whose bitterness lasted well into the post-war period. Lindenbaum saw the verbal attacks against him as clear proof that Buthner must be a convinced anti-Semite⁴³⁵.

After the failed efforts to spy on Buthner, the
The "Reds" made further attempts to get rid of the opponent, who was now recognized as dangerous. However, the plan to blacken his name with the SS was, from the point of view of the
"Communists" continue to be "unfortunately in vain". The efforts to replace him with

⁴³² StA Frankfurt a.M., Ennittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 208, statement by Cuenca, 2.2. 1968.

⁴³³ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ennittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 277, Mucha statement, October 20, 1966.

⁴³⁴ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ennittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 227, statement by Drohocki, 22.7.1 968.

⁴³⁵ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ennittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 51 ff., statement by Lindenbaum, 16.2. 1966.

The attempts to remove the Political Department from his post were thwarted by SS doctor Fischer, who stood protectively in front of Buthner⁴³⁶. As a result, they tried to influence Buthner through his good connections in the other Auschwitz camps. Hermann Langbein, who was a clerk for Fischer's superior site doctor Wirths, was to make contact with Polish inmates. In fact, Buthner was probably warned in this way not to engage in any further anti-Semitic activities⁴³⁷.

Whether this changed Buthner's behavior can no longer be determined today. However, he was probably careful not to get into open confrontation with the Communist underground movement in the camp. Otherwise he would hardly have remained a camp elder until the evacuation. However, Buthner was never able to shake off his reputation as an anti-Semite. Many prisoners, both Jewish and non-Jewish, accused him of letting his racial prejudices rather than medical criteria guide his selections: He was seen as the "Polish fascist" *st/en*⁴³⁸ "with an anti-Semitic attitude"⁴³⁹, who had only suggested Jews for selection, but in no case non-Jewish Poles.

After more than five decades, it is no longer possible to examine such an accusation in a specific individual case. However, a few general observations can be made which make the context of Buthner's accused behavior somewhat clearer: It is true to the facts that since Buthner took office in Monowitz, with few exceptions, only Jews were transferred to Birkenau for gassing. However, the proportion of Jewish inmates in the camp was about 90 percent anyway. Therefore, if selection was carried out, the large majority of those selected had to be Jewish. According to consensus, it was mainly completely debilitated inmates, so-called *Muselmänner*, who were put forward for selection because there was no longer any prospect of recovery under the camp conditions. From 1943, on the other hand, there was hardly any risk of non-Jewish prisoners becoming "exhausted" to such an extreme degree through labor, malnutrition and illness. Due to the increasingly frequent arrival of Jewish transports, the Slavs, who had previously been treated so harshly, had also moved up the camp hierarchy.

For Jewish prisoners who were sent to Monowitz in the course of the large deportation operations, the risk was all the greater, as they were exposed to multiple disadvantages: they arrived at the camp by the hundreds in anonymous transports and encountered a well-established "camp self-administration" run by Polish and communist prisoners. They were exhausted from the days-long journey and, once the quarantine period was over, they were sent to the "heaviest" labor detachments in Buna. Their marking with the Star of David made them victims of racist excesses by German civilian employees, members of the SS and some BV prisoners, both at the workplace and in the camp.

⁴³⁶ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 422, statement by Peiser, 30.6. 1969.

⁴³⁷ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 315, statement by Langbein, March 24, 1969.

⁴³⁸ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 48 f., statement by Posnanski, February 16, 1966.

⁴³⁹ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 284, statement by Posener, 10.10.1968.

lingen. The proportion of people who were not used to hard physical labor was also relatively high among the new Jewish arrivals. This made them all the more susceptible to accidents and injuries. Their food situation was by far the worst, as they no longer had any relatives who could have sent them food parcels. Anyone who didn't stand out from the crowd for some reason or simply by accident therefore had little chance of not becoming a "Muselmann" within a few months. If one considers the situation of the Jewish inmates in the Monowitz camp, then the accusation that Buthner's anti-Semitic motives were the reason for the almost exclusive selection of Jews seems unfounded. Regardless of his personal attitude, the living and working conditions in the Monowitz camp inevitably led to the almost exclusive selection of Jewish prisoners. The ongoing extermination operations in Auschwitz had in any case changed the attitude of the camp SS in this respect. that non-Jewish prisoners were generally excluded from gassing⁴⁴⁰.

The assertion that Buthner gave young prisoners and intellectuals better treatment than the "simple" prisoners is not so clear-cut⁴⁴¹. The preference given to a particular group for subjective and non-medical reasons does indeed raise ethical questions. In the Monowitz infirmary, however, the respective inmate doctor found himself in such an emergency situation every day, as the available medical material was only ever sufficient for a small proportion of the inmates. The decision as to who was to be treated and who was not could not be made according to purely medical criteria, as many patients hardly differed in their need. Instead, the prisoner doctors always had to make the same diagnoses, which were mainly phlegmon, frostbite or diarrhea. Who was given the few medicines and who was denied them was therefore an essentially arbitrary decision. Hardly anyone would act in such a situation without being influenced by subjective factors. Whether it is therefore more "moral" to provide young people and intellectuals, workers or members of a particular religion or nationality with the few resources available cannot therefore be asked in a meaningful way. The decision-making situation in the camp left the doctor with no real alternative courses of action.

In addition, prisoners accused Buthner of having taken a more active part in the selections than was necessary, sometimes even initiating and carrying them out himself⁴⁴². While some statements attest that Buthner only "hopeless cases" in the "preselections"⁴⁴³, the vast majority accuse him of instrumentalizing selections for his own ends.

⁴⁴⁰ If non-Jewish prisoners were to be sent to Birkenau during a selection, the Political Department, to which the list was submitted for approval, intervened and deleted these names. StA Frankfurt a.M., Investigation Case 4 Js 798/64, p. 43 1, Waitz statement, 2.7. 1969.

⁴⁴¹ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 737, statement by Drohocki, 26.5. 1970; *ibid.*, p. 486, Kaplan statement, 4.8. 1969.

⁴⁴² StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 1 044, statement Schulhof, 21 .6. 1947.

⁴⁴³ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 598, statement by Cuenca, 30. I 0. 1969.

Goals. Buthner is said to have not only been more rigorous in the selection process than the SS doctor and the SOG, but also to have shown a desire to keep "his" HKB free of those unable to work⁴⁴⁴. He allegedly also used selections to get rid of "business partners" who had become disagreeable to him⁴⁴⁵. The contradictory reports on Buthner's person can no longer be clarified in detail due to the long time lag and the lack of contemporary reference files.

Only a few behaviors can therefore be deduced with some certainty from the confusing statements: Buthner demonstrated great compliance towards the SS, which on the other hand gave him a certain amount of room for maneuver. He obviously felt a particular need to present himself positively in the eyes of the SS doctors. The "show operations" mentioned above can only be explained by this motive. His assistance with selections was therefore sometimes characterized by anticipatory obedience, even if no clearly negative consequences for the prisoners can be derived from this. A certain anti-Semitic attitude does indeed seem to have characterized Buthner's work; however, it was not decisive for the almost exclusive selection and murder of Jewish prisoners from Monowitz. Rather, all the evidence points to the fact that a predetermined quota was generally selected. Buthner's preference for young, talented and highly educated prisoners is quite clear from the reports of his fellow inmates. In doing so, he may have come into conflict with his medical duties by allowing himself to be guided by subjective preferences. However, there is much to suggest that this was true not only for Buthner, but also for many other inmate doctors.

Medical action in KL

This raises the fundamental question of how traditional medical and medical standards could be applied in the exceptional situation of a concentration camp. The prisoner doctors and many other (political) prisoner functionaries were already aware at the time that the usual rules of conduct and assessment categories had reached their limits. Coordinated adaptation to the extreme conditions had to fail because of the existential threat that all prisoners had to live under. Medical action without the possibility of providing all patients with the necessary medication or treatment was bound to break the usual norms. Since it was therefore out of the question to refrain from providing any medical care, rules were sought that were practicable under the exceptional conditions of the camp.

The inmate doctors at the Auschwitz II/Birkenau camp, for example, came to the agreement to "behave in a way that served the survival of as many inmates as possible"⁴⁴⁶. This commitment to the lives of the inmates reached its limits where their own survival appeared to be at risk. This general

⁴⁴⁴ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 1 044, statement Schulhof, 21 .6. 1947.

⁴⁴⁵ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 53, statement by Lindenbaum, 1 6.2. 1 966.

⁴⁴⁶ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 882, statement by Lingens, September 28, 1970.

My instructions also seem to have been applied in Monowitz. The extensive expansion of the **HKB** against the will of the IG and the "organization" and construction of many medical devices was certainly in the service of the prisoners as a whole. However, it was not possible to determine which individual prisoners were granted less medication, better food or even concealment from the SS doctor's selection and possibly more than the officially permitted 14 days recovery time. Rather, the camp's internal power relations had to be taken into account when granting such preferential treatment: Those who occupied a higher position in the prisoner hierarchy could assume that their influence also extended into the HKB. It did not matter which group he belonged to. In order to keep his post, the "camp elder HKB" was just as dependent on the support of his own organization as on that of the other influential groups in the camp. Failure to observe these unwritten rules could have led to countermeasures with unforeseeable consequences.

In addition to this comparatively small contingent of prisoner functionaries The decision on the type of treatment was made by the respective doctor, ultimately by the camp elder of the HKB. Due to the lack of clear norms of behavior, subjective motivations probably exerted a strong involuntary influence here. Similar to the relationship between ordinary prisoner and prisoner functionary, the ability to communicate between doctor and patient was probably of decisive importance at first. Those who could communicate in the same language quickly emerged from anonymity. In Monowitz in particular, where Jews from various European countries were deported, this was an invaluable advantage. Nationality, as well as membership of a religious community or political group, consciously or unconsciously influenced almost all decision-makers in the camp. Unsurprisingly, given his biography, all those who had dealings with Buthner unanimously reported a clear Polish-national mindset. Apparently no one could detect any sympathy for Jews in him⁴⁴⁷. However, opinions differ as to whether his preference for young and intellectual people could override his national or religious preferences. The fact that Buthner favored his compatriots in a certain way was not an exception in the camp. Within the diversity of nations in the Monowitz camp, the same nationality had a strong unifying effect, as a Jewish camp doctor also confirmed: "I do not believe that Buthner was motivated by feelings of hatred when selecting the sick. drove. As a Pole, he favored the Poles. For my part, as a Jew, I favored the Jews, especially French people, because that's my nationality."⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁷ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 737, statement by Drohocki, 26.5. 1970; *ibid.*, p. 486, Kaplan statement, 4.8. 1969.

⁴⁴⁸ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 934, statement by Lubicz, 4. 11. 1970.

Prisoner functionaries and resistance in Monowitz

Although the behavior of the camp elder of the HKB apparently complied with the rules of the camp society, he was later confronted with a multitude of accusations, which ultimately led to Buthner being investigated in the 1960s⁴⁴⁹. The many statements obtained from former prisoners and in particular doctors and nurses at HKB Monowitz sometimes contradict each other diametrically. A relatively clear correlation can be established between the assessment of Buthner and the national or religious origin of the respective witness. Without exception, non-Jewish Poles rated Buthner

as a benefactor, even if his character was sometimes described as unsympathetic⁴⁵⁰. Communist and Jewish statements portray him - with a somewhat wider range - as an accomplice of the SS who was characterized by inhumanity towards Jews⁴⁵¹. This split image of Buthner seems to have developed during the first phase of his work in Monowitz. By mid-1943, the small group of former Buchenwald inmates had taken almost complete control of the "inmate self-administration" in the camp. The HKB, however, did not seem to meet the requirements of a camp designed for maximum utilization of manpower. After two medical laymen were appointed to the position of "camp elder HKB", the new economic orientation was to be demonstrated by the appointment of a doctor, who was also to provide more efficient treatment for those unable to work. The appointment of Buthner, a Pole, to the highest position in the infirmary - probably not against the interests of the SS - led to a competitive situation with the "Red" group, which had previously been the only dominant group.

The policy of the camp elder of the HKB then seems to have triggered a veritable "struggle for power in the camp"⁴⁵², which was expressed above all in constant competition for influential positions in the camp. Buthner seems to have won this conflict within the infirmary. He was able to combine the sensible replacement of lay medical personnel with trained nursing staff with the replacement of communist functionaries by Poles. In doing so, he was doing exactly what the mainly communist functionary inmates from Buchenwald had undertaken in the months leading up to Buthner's appointment and - albeit to a lesser extent - continued to do afterwards⁴⁵³. Inevitably, he had to come into conflict with the

⁴⁴⁹ This was initiated by the public prosecutor's office of the Frankfurt am Main Regional Court. Many of the statements used here come from the investigation files. The investigation was opened on September 12, 1975, as the court was of the opinion that Buthner had committed the crimes with which he was charged in a situation of emergency; see also Chapter IV.3.

⁴⁵⁰ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 1 320, statement by Maneli, July 1, 1971; *ibid.*, p. 737, Drohocki statement, 26.5. 1 970.

⁴⁵¹ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 422, statement Peiser, 30.6. 1 969; *ibid.*, p. 284, Aus says Posener, 1 0.10.1 968.

⁴⁵² StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 229, statement by Drohocki, July 22, 1 968.

⁴⁵³ Cf. Wohl, Arbeit, p. 1 57 ff.

The goals of the communist underground movement, which a former leading member formulated shortly after the war as follows:

1. saving human lives (special task of the KB and conditional on the pol. Dept., typing pool and work service)
2. A precise control of the orders issued by the SS (special task of the typing pool and the political department, conditionally of the KB)
3. Delaying the completion of buildings and projects at Buna. (special task of the field crews and the labor service)
4. Training of young people.
5. Establishing contact with civilians, forced laborers and prisoners of war (special task of the field detachments)
6. Procurement of materials to improve the situation of the prisoners (special task of the external detachments)."⁴⁵⁴

Against the backdrop of Posener's very detailed experiences in other respects as well in the light of memories of the events and conditions in the Monowitz camp, this list is probably a very accurate reflection of what the leadership of the communist resistance group wanted to achieve there. Nevertheless, the list gives the deceptive impression that it was concerned with the welfare of all prisoners. Comprehensible as a document of the first post-war period, when the political prisoners and survivors of the Nazi regime and their resistance actions were praised, the view must be more critical with the distance of a few decades. There is no doubt that the "red" prisoners were also the most active resistance group in Monowitz for the reasons described above. However, their actions were initially aimed at improving the living conditions of their members and sympathizers. If this resulted in positive side effects for the "masses" of prisoners, this must be acknowledged, but should not obscure the underlying intentions. First and foremost, the communist underground group was concerned with its own chances of survival. This also meant that they were able to place their party comrades in the relatively secure jobs in the HKB.

In a very similar way, the camp elder of the HKB, Buthner, also favored his compatriots in recruitment, and not even exclusively⁴⁵⁵. As the head of the Polish-nationalist, non-Jewish Poles, he also did everything in his power to support "his" people. As a result, the proportion of both groups, the Communist and the Polish resistance organizations, in the functional positions in Monowitz was clearly disproportionate compared to their absolute strength. Even, or perhaps especially, under the often less transparent camp conditions, a system of "rope teams" functioned. This naturally meant that the "ordinary" prisoners were at a disadvantage and their chances of survival were reduced as a result. This did not only occur indirectly by limiting the possibility of climbing up the prisoner hierarchy and thus improving one's own life prospects. Rather, it could also happen that a qua

⁴⁵⁴ **APMO**, Osw/Posener/I/4, p. 48.

⁴⁵⁵ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 854, statement by Kahn, 8.9. 1970.

lified skilled worker lost his place in his command to an unqualified protege during a stay in the HKB⁴⁵⁶.

Here, the organized prisoner groups intervened directly in the camp's life. The camp's staff were willing to risk a person's chances of survival in order to protect their comrades. Such actions do not stand up to any subsequent ethical evaluation, but in view of the conditions in the camp, no one can be blamed for acting for the benefit of those close to them. Both the communist and the national-polish community succeeded in building up a network of relationships that served to secure their own lives and those of the group members. Although these social ties were not consciously directed against others, they had an exclusionary effect and were therefore potentially fatal for the individual in the "mass" of prisoners. In view of the living conditions in the camp, the success of both resistance groups must nevertheless be recognized as a great effort of adaptation and survival, the assessment of which would not be adequate to the circumstances of the time according to the usual ethical standards.

The "Buthner case" sheds light on the fundamental problem of the prisoner functionary in an exemplary way. Buthner was trapped in a strange hierarchical position in which he could not really act freely. He had to fulfill the task assigned to him by the SS if he wanted to keep his position. By gaining the respect of his SS superiors over time, he managed to achieve a certain room for maneuver, which he can also use in the interests of the prisoners⁴⁵⁷. Compared to the mass deaths that took place every day in Monowitz, this limited freedom of choice was minimal. For the individual prisoner, however, it could mean life or death. Under the externally imposed living and care conditions, Buthner's influence was limited to the (re)distribution of the few treatment resources available and the occasional intervention in favor of an otherwise lost inmate.

In view of the limited room for maneuver in absolute terms, this was bound to lead to conflict with the other group in the camp struggling for distribution rights. While the contrast typical of other camps between "Reds" and "Greens" had only played a role in the very first phase of the Monowitz camp, the "Communists" fought with the Polish national prisoners for positions of power. This competition served the SS, which was increasingly withdrawing from everyday life in the camp, as a practical means of ensuring that no individual inmate group could become overpowering: as long as they fought each other, they could not seriously question the power of the SS⁴⁵⁸. On the other hand, both resistance groups had to be careful to ensure that the few advantages available were only given to their own members: A broader distribution would have jeopardized the existence of the group ensuring its own survival.

⁴⁵⁶ The position of chemist Ernest Rivington in the "Chemical Command" at the Buna construction site was filled by a Polish lawyer during the treatment of his phlegmon.

⁴⁵⁷ Cf. Sofsky, *Order*, p. 165.

⁴⁵⁸ Cf. Sofsky, *Ordnung*, p. 158 f.

refusal to help the SS would have directly jeopardized their existence.

In the situation of the HKB, the dilemma of a functionary became particularly clear, as here every small preference or disadvantage often directly decided the life chances of a prisoner. The almost total power of the camp elder of the HKB within the given framework was less visible than that of the camp captain, who could brutally mistreat or kill prisoners. In the infirmary, a word, sometimes even a small gesture, was enough to send a prisoner to the gas chamber. Although less conspicuous, the judgment of life or death was made before the eyes of many, the other patients, the nurses and doctors. Since there could be no objective distribution criteria, the camp elder inevitably had to expose himself to a wide range of criticism, as each individual had a share in the decision.

would have subjectively decided differently in his place. He was subject to the objective dilemma of an "extreme zero-sum constellation"⁴⁵⁹: Every improvement in the survival chances of his own group had to mean a complementary deterioration for other prisoners, as the total resources available were fixed and too limited.

In view of this difficult situation, the establishment of a reasonably functioning infirmary with specialist medical care and comparatively good equipment must be recognized as a great achievement. All the more so as it seems questionable whether a "red" functional prisoner, however popular with the inmates, could have achieved anything adequate. A "social" setting was of course well received by the prisoners, but could not replace medical care. Without doubting the high-mindedness of the first camp elder of the HKB, Ludwig Wörl, which was emphasized by many – certainly rightly so – **the question** must be asked: Can the treatment of the sick by untrained but communist-minded prisoners be justified, even though doctors were available in the camp? Wanting to do good without being able to do it proved fatal for many prisoners in the initial phase of the hospital. Against the background of his efforts to build up the HKB and his individual misconduct, Buthner's actions can perhaps best be summed up in the words of a Polish prisoner who, in one of the most nuanced reports about him, said that "he was no angel, but he was no criminal either"⁴⁶⁰.

7. The Monowitz camp: a summary

The Monowitz camp was the first large concentration camp built on the initiative of a private industrial company. It was the result of intensive efforts by IG Auschwitz to build a prisoner camp directly on the factory premises, which was intended to allow the most efficient use of prisoners without losses due to marching or harassment by the guards. In the eyes of the construction management, Monowitz was a reservoir of cheap, immediately available and almost arbitrarily deployable workers, whose safety was not a major concern.

⁴⁵⁹ Cf. Sofsky, *Ordnung*, p. 189.

⁴⁶⁰ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. I 320, statement by Maneli, 15.7.1971.

to thank the SS. In the hope of making a profit, the company invested five million Reichsmarks in the construction of the camp and the barriers required by the SS. IG Auschwitz thus had its own concentration camp since the fall of 1942.

The focus on the economic requirements of the large chemical plant shaped the internal structure of the Monowitz camp and the living conditions of the prisoners. Nevertheless, a "world of its own" existed there, with which the IG management rarely came into personal contact. Although the management decided directly on the conditions in the camp by restricting nursing care and taking over the food supply, the senior managers did not have to get their hands dirty. The internal affairs of "Lagers Buna" were entirely in the hands of the SS, so that the IG employees were not directly confronted with the consequences of their instructions and complaints.

Of course, the SS did not pursue the economic goals of the chemical company in Monowitz; for them, the "Buna camp" was first and foremost a subcamp of the Auschwitz concentration camp. The guards therefore ensured that the labor detachments working on the construction site were available on a daily basis. Beyond that, however, their attention was focused less on the labor productivity of the prisoners than on securing the camp from the outside and maintaining internal "order". Without taking the economic needs of the armaments factory into consideration, the camp management in Monowitz also attempted to put the SS's racial ideological program into practice. Accordingly, the decisive structural factor in all areas of camp life was the respective position of the prisoners within the National Socialist hierarchy of nations and races.

"Aryan" prisoners were therefore given preferential treatment when it came to the allocation of posts, assignment to work detachments and care in the infirmary. The Jewish prisoners, on the other hand, who were

were the strongest group, were under constant pressure of persecution by the SS⁴⁶¹ exposed, they were the "pariahs of the warehouse". Exhausting work, harassment, maltreatment and systematic discrimination sapped their strength to such an extent that their chances of surviving the camp for more than a few weeks were extremely slim. For the Jewish prisoners, the living conditions in Monowitz were thus considerably harsher than in the main Auschwitz camp: in addition to chronic underprovisioning in all areas of life and the arbitrariness of the SS, there was also the exhausting work on the IG construction site.

In order to maintain the perfidious system of exploitation, the camp SS and IG-Bauleitung were more dependent on the support of Kapos and block elders than in other camps. These prisoner functionaries ensured that the strict rules in the camp were enforced amidst the linguistic and cultural confusion of the prisoners deported from many different European countries

⁴⁶¹ Pingel, Häftlinge, p. 168 f.

and performance quotas on the construction site. In return, they enjoyed privileges such as better clothing and food and were exempt from work themselves. As intermediaries between the SS and IG on the one hand and the "masses" of prisoners on the other, they were in a strange intermediate position. As camp inmates, they continued to sit without any real rights, but the prisoner functionaries had considerable power over the inmates under their command and often decided over life or death. Only a few Jews were able to reach such a privileged position, whereas all "Aryan" and many Polish prisoners did.

The resistance groups in the camp decided on the allocation of almost all posts. However, they did not initially use the influence associated with this in the interests of the prisoners as a whole. Rather, the Communist and Polish national underground organizations were initially concerned primarily with the survival of their respective factions out of their own self-interest. This led to a struggle for power in the camp, which the SS cleverly exploited to keep the two groups in check.

However, the two political resistance groups in Monowitz succeeded early on in ousting the "green" prisoner group, which dominated in many other camps, from important functions. Although this meant that the arbitrary beatings out of pure sadism were less pronounced, the chances of survival for the "simple" prisoners were no better. In view of the miserable accommodation and the completely inadequate food rations, which were further decimated by corruption, they were in no way able to compensate for the daily loss of strength in the work detachments.

Under these circumstances, only those who were able to adapt to the laws of the camp, which contradicted all experience, could survive. Unscrupulousness and a blunting of emotions towards the events in Monowitz proved to be successful recipes for surviving the first eight to ten weeks, after which the chances of survival increased again. Softer characters could only survive the camp if they enjoyed the protection of one of the resistance groups. Both the Communists and the National Poles succeeded to a remarkable extent in ensuring the survival of their members – at the expense of the "masses" of prisoners.

However, the use of the IG site did not only bring disadvantages for the prisoners. The isolation of the camp from the outside world, as practiced by the SS elsewhere, could not be maintained in Monowitz. Despite official prohibitions, there were numerous opportunities for contact with civilian workers and prisoners of war during work. In this way, partly with the approval of the Lager SS, exchanged or stolen objects were brought to Monowitz, which were mainly used on the black market, but also to equip the hospital. The connection to the various Polish resistance groups in the area around Auschwitz also came about on the building site. Polish civilian workers were thus able to smuggle out letters and pass on information about planned escapes. The daily exchange between the camp and the factory made it impossible for the SS to create the closed camp cosmos they were striving for.

The Monowitz concentration camp was the first attempt to combine the IG's striving for cheap and ruthless labor with the SS's efforts to murder the Jews, the main opponents of the National Socialists, in a joint enterprise. The goals of production on the one hand and destruction on the other, which under normal circumstances would be contradictory, were to be brought together in a mutually profitable synthesis. However, the fundamental incompatibility of the respective intentions also caused difficulties in the practical implementation in the special situation of Auschwitz. The question of the extent to which IG succeeded in realizing its economic interests with the prisoner camp is the focus of the next chapter.

IV. Economization and escalation:

Prisoner deployment and factory development after the end of the war

1. Prisoner deployment in private industry - IG Auschwitz as a model

The establishment of the Monowitz camp marked a change in the orientation of the National Socialist concentration camp system. It was the first large camp to be planned and built with the aim of exploiting its inmates economically by a private company. IG Auschwitz became a model that decisively shaped the relationship between the SS and the armaments industry in the years that followed.

In February 1941, when IG board member Otto Ambras tried to obtain the allocation of concentration camp prisoners for the new factory in Auschwitz via Carl Krauch, this was something new. Although prisoners had been used for labor since the Nazi regime had set up the first camps in 1933, it was not primarily a question of their economic exploitation¹. At that time, labor was not a scarce commodity, which is why the work carried out by prisoners was not allowed to compete with the search for work by millions of Germans. Although the work performed there was also allowed to be productive in order to limit the maintenance costs of the camps, it mainly served to "educate" the prisoners. In practice, this often meant nothing more than that the prisoners had to carry out meaningless tasks, sometimes having to repeat the same work step over and over again. Work thus served to harass and exhaust opponents of the regime (mainly communist in the initial phase), whose resistance was to be broken. The purpose of work in the early camps was primarily the realization of political, and only rarely economic, goals.

From around 1936, the tasks of the concentration camps changed. After the Nazi regime had consolidated its power and political opponents had been almost completely eliminated, the SS began to focus on other population groups that were "socially undesirable". Only in this way was it possible to secure the existence of the concentration camps, which had fulfilled their original function, for the future. The new Sachsenhausen and Buchenwald camps were therefore filled with so-called asocials, habitual criminals and Jehovah's Witnesses². While the socially stigmatized were generally sent to a concentration camp immediately after serving a prison sentence, the "serious Bible students" were sent there solely on the basis of their religious convictions.

The situation on the labor market had also changed fundamentally in the meantime. In 1938, Hitler's regime had succeeded in almost completely reducing the high unemployment rate, primarily through the forced rearmament. Supported by foreign policy successes, Germans' approval of their "Führer's" policies was approaching its peak, although general prosperity had barely increased. Instead of being invested in the production of consumer goods, the majority of

¹ Cf. Pingel, Häftlinge, p. 35 f.

² Cf. Broszat, Konzentrationslager, p. 66 ff.

Part of the investment in armaments. The four-year plan, which had been running since the fall of 1936, was intended to make Germany ready for war by 1940. Within these efforts, the inmates of the concentration camps were also assigned a productive task. Particularly in the Flossenbürg camp in the Upper Palatinate and the Mauthausen camp in Lower Austria, they were now required to hew granite in quarries for the future "Führer buildings"³. Due to the changed economic and political conditions, work in the camps now took on increasing economic significance.

Compared to private companies, however, the use of prisoners hardly met the criteria of economic efficiency. At this time, all prisoners were employed in SS-owned companies, most of whose personnel lacked the necessary training and recruitment⁴. For the majority of SS leaders, the priority continued to be order, discipline and education rather than efficiency. The SS operations only had an economic basis for existence due to the extremely low wages they had to pay to the Reich for the use of camp inmates. Conversely, this naturally removed the pressure to organize working conditions according to the rules of economic efficiency.

The initiative of the IG Farben industry to employ prisoners on a large scale in a privately financed armaments project represented a turning point in the development of the concentration camp system. In this case, the work of the camp inmates was subject to the laws of the (albeit regulated) market and was therefore in direct competition with other categories of labor. In the medium term, this form of prisoner employment was therefore only possible if a company expected economic benefits from it. At this time, the IG obviously saw the prisoners as a cheap source of potential labor, which they did not want to miss out on in view of the depleted labor market. The cooperation between the IG and the SS gave the concentration camps an additional task: after the first phase from the "seizure of power" until about 1936 had focused on controlling the political opponent and the first attempts to use the camps productively had begun until about 1941, this cooperation agreement heralded the third period, which was to be characterized by "armament production and mass extermination"⁵.

The determined actions of IG board members Otto Ambros and Heinrich Bütefisch had drawn Himmler's attention to the Auschwitz concentration camp in February 1941. The resulting cooperation was to have a decisive influence on developments. The prospects that now opened up must have seemed tempting to those involved. The IG hoped for a cheap and, above all, already available workforce at the site, which would ensure the rapid and profitable completion of the new plant. Himmler, on the other hand, hoped that the connection with one of Germany's largest companies would be a

³ Cf. Frei, *Führerstaat*, p. 125 f.

⁴ Cf. Georg, *Unternehmungen*, passim, in particular pp. 12-24, 42-69.

⁵ Cf. Pingel, *Häftlinge*, passim.

further consolidation and expansion of his personal power. His SS leaders were still able to make use of the expertise of the IG specialists, the camp inmates could now finally perform truly productive work for the state, and Himmler himself, as the manager of a considerable contingent of potential armaments workers, was able to extend his influence into a new area. In his imagination, this cooperation, which appeared to be profitable for both sides, was of course only the beginning.

Already on his first visit to Auschwitz on March 1, 1941, not even two weeks after Göring had brought IG Farben's request to his attention, Himmler was apparently thinking about a "gigantic" expansion of the camp⁶. In addition to the expansion of the main camp to a capacity of 30,000 men, an entire camp town was to be built just a few kilometers away for 100,000 Russian war prisoners.

The result was a large number of prisoners, which he expected from the already decided campaign against the Soviet Union⁷. Even if Himmler's intentions for Auschwitz were only roughly outlined, "it can be considered certain that his plans were based on the future peace perspective of a huge production complex for self-sufficiency.

of the SS, to prepare their settlement program and - last but not least - to develop close cooperation with large-scale industry"⁸. The establishment of the IG thus had the unintended effect of triggering the development that made Auschwitz the center of Nazi extermination policy.

The failure of the "Blitzkrieg" against the Soviet Union drastically changed the prospects for the German arms industry in the fall of 1941. The looming war of attrition made a further increase in the production of weapons and ammunition unavoidable, which could not remain without influence on the development of the concentration camps. In this situation, Himmler now saw the opportunity to realize his old wish for the productive use of prisoners on a larger scale. The Reichsführer SS therefore willingly took part in the impending "structural change", which was to allow "custody

of prisoners solely for security, educational or preventive reasons" no longer seemed justified⁹. Questions of economic efficiency had now become so important that "the mobilization of all prisoner labour, first for war tasks (armament increase) and later for peacetime construction tasks" became increasingly important. Himmler drew the conclusion from this that the concentration camps should be removed from their "former one-sided political form" and transformed into a new "organization corresponding to economic tasks".

However, it was soon to become apparent that the use of prisoner labor in the private armaments industry, which only expanded considerably in the last two years of the war

⁶ According to the latest research, however, the order to establish the camp was not issued until the fall of 1941; see Steinbacher, "Musterstadt" Auschwitz, Chapter V. I.

⁷ This was the original purpose of the later Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp.

⁸ Pingel, *Häftlinge*, p. 120.

⁹ Nümbg. doc. R-129, Pohl to RFSS, 1.5.1942.

did not fundamentally change the "character" of the concentration camps. It did not offer the Jewish prisoners a new perspective, but only a brief respite before the SS murdered them in the gas chambers.

Organization of prisoner deployment by the WVHA

With effect from May 1, 1942, the RFSS incorporated the concentration camp inspectorate, which until then had been assigned to the SS Main Command Office, into the WVHA, which had been formed a few months earlier, as "Office Group D"¹⁰. The head of the WVHA, Oswald Pohl, took the increased economic importance of the concentration camp inmates into account by creating a separate office D2 for "matters concerning the work deployment of inmates"¹¹. Himmler had entrusted him with the "ministerial" control of prisoner deployment¹². To ensure that its imminent expansion to the private industry was as effective as possible, Pohl also reserved the right to appoint the position of head of office D2 for himself. His choice fell on Gerhard Maurer¹³, who had already worked for Pohl as an inspector of the SS economic enterprises. His commercial training, a qualification that was not very common within the SS, probably predestined him for the new post.

Maurer's main task was to examine all applications from companies that wanted to employ concentration camp prisoners. Every company intending to employ prisoners had to fulfill certain criteria: First, Office D 2 checked whether there was actually a need for labor in the respective company. If this was the case, the requesting company had to provide proof of sufficient accommodation, which was then checked on site. Maurer allegedly attached particular importance to the fact that the accommodation was in "hygienically perfect" condition and had the "necessary sanitary facilities"¹⁴. Overall, he saw it as his task to act as a "representative of the prisoners' interests". The previous chapter has shown how inadequate this was for the Monowitz concentration camp. Together with plant manager Dürrfeld, Maurer became the decisive man for the development of the use of prisoners at IG Auschwitz.

¹⁰ Himmler's order for integration into the WVHA had already been issued on March 3, 1942, but was not to take effect until May 1, 1942. On this and the following AGK, SWKr- 12, p. 449, statement by Pohl, 28.8.1947.

¹¹ AGK, SWKr- 11, p. 313 f., statement by Maurer, 29.6.1947.

¹² AGK, SWKr-12, p. 449 f., statement by Pohl, 28.8.1947.

¹³ SS-Standartenführer Gerhard Maurer, born 9.12.1907 in Halle/Saale, was a businessman by profession. He joined the SS in 1931 and from 1936 worked as an administrative specialist at the SS administrative office in Munich. In 1938 he became head of administration of the military training area and hospital in Dachau; in the summer of 1939 he was promoted to head of accounting at DEST in Berlin, and from 1940 also at DAW. From the fall of 1941, he acted as auditor of all W operations and the Waffen-SS troop magazines; from May 1942, he was head of the D 2 office group of the WVHA. On January 1, 1945, Maurer was transferred to a field unit in Holland at his own request. After the end of the war, he went into hiding until he was arrested in Nuremberg on March 31, 1947 (according to his own statement already on March 12, 1947). After his extradition to the Polish authorities, Maurer was sentenced to death by the Voivodship Court in Krakow and executed in December 1951.

¹⁴ AGK, SWKr-11, p. 314 f., Maurer statement, June 29, 1947.

The application procedure for the provision of inmate labor for private company was standardized when Maurer took office. The basis for the allocation of workers, regardless of whether they were German, foreign or prisoner workers, was a request to the local employment office¹⁵. A company could only apply to the WVHA if it no longer had any regular workers available. No company employed prisoners without having expressly requested them; the initiative always came from the companies. According to Höß' recollection, the requests from industrial companies "were so frequent that they could not be met in the slightest. could" ¹⁶.

The management of IG Auschwitz generally submitted their applications via the branch office of the Auschwitz employment office, which was located on the factory premises. From Auschwitz, the applications were first sent to the regional employment office in Katowice and from there to the Reich employment office. From Berlin, the factory finally received either the desired contingents – usually foreign workers from Poland and the occupied eastern territories, or, if none were available, the message that they "would be served by the Auschwitz concentration camp" ¹⁷. With the message from the labor office, the IG was then able to request inmate workers from KL Auschwitz.

According to official regulations, Maurer had to check each individual application and then submit it to the head of the WVHA, Pohl, not his direct superior Glücks, for approval¹⁸. However, the actual technical examination was the responsibility of Maurer, who was therefore also the contact person for the companies. In the case of IG Auschwitz, maximum quotas were apparently agreed between the factory and the representatives of the WVHA, within which the concentration camp could allocate prisoners from its stock independently. The continuous reassignment of prisoners to replace those who were absent due to illness, exhaustion, injury or death therefore did not require a new application in Berlin. Only such a simplified procedure, following a careful examination of the initial allocation, allowed Maurer's department to cope with the immense expansion of industrial prisoner labour deployment. The increasing sums paid by the companies for the prisoners were transferred to the WVHA via the official treasury of the respective concentration camp. The control of the proper accounting of the

Prisoner rent was the responsibility of office group A. In addition, "an Amtsrat of the Rechnungshof" sat in the WVHA, who checked the accounts with the Reich Treasury ¹⁹.

¹⁵ On this and the following: StA Frankfurt a.M., criminal case 4 Ks 2/63, folder 26, Dürrfeld statement, 9.4.1965, p. 3. Nuremberg Doc. NI-5670, testimony of Stothfang, 28.3.1947. Nuremberg Doc. NI-5183, statement ter Sea, 29.4.1947.

¹⁶ Nuremberg Doc. NI-39, Höß testimony, May 17, 1946, p. 3.

¹⁷ StA Frankfurt a.M., criminal case 4 Ks 2/63, folder 26, statement Dürrfeld, April 9, 1965, p. 3.

¹⁸ AGK, SWKr-12, p. 450, statement by Pohl, August 28, 1947.

¹⁹ Nuremberg Doc. NI-1066, testimony Sommer, 8.10.1946, p. 9.

IG Auschwitz as a model for other companies

Despite the problems and obstacles that had arisen in the use of prisoners at IG Auschwitz, the experience gained shaped the further development of cooperation between the SS and private industry. The requirements procedure, the security precautions and the financial handling of the leasing of prisoners had been tested on a large scale for the first time in Auschwitz since the spring of 1941. Initially, it was mainly state and semi-state companies that began to use prisoners for armaments purposes, but from the beginning, and increasingly from mid-1942, other private companies also took up this option²⁰. However, setting up their own camp at the respective private companies was associated with considerable difficulties. The first "concentration camp for the industrial use of prisoner labour" was therefore set up in April 1942 at the request of a (semi-)state-owned company, the Volkswagen factory in Wolfsburg. However, this first use of prisoners in armaments production, which was linked to a purpose-built camp, revealed considerable disputes over competence between the agencies involved. The new VW camp in Arbeitsdorf, which was occupied by 600 prisoners from Neuengamme concentration camp, therefore only existed until the beginning of October 1942, after the Ministry of Armaments and Munitions had prohibited the expansion of the factory hall built there²¹.

Cooperation between the SS and armaments companies could not be established without problems because the respective interests were not as congruent everywhere as in Auschwitz. Himmler was not only interested in utilizing the prisoners under his control for the armament efforts of the German Reich. Cooperation with the private sector was much more about providing him with the necessary know-how to create an autonomous economic basis for the SS and its own weapons production in the medium term. In order to maximize his influence on the respective companies, he therefore pushed for their production facilities to be set up in the existing concentration camps. This met with little approval from the companies, not only because of the enormous costs involved, but also because they found a powerful advocate in Albert Speer, the new Minister for Armaments and Munitions, who had been in office since February 1942. In mid-September of the same year, Speer and the head of the WVHA, Oswald Pohl, commissioned by Himmler, initially agreed on the "takeover of closed armaments tasks of the greatest magnitude by the KL"²². However, the agreement provided for completely new armaments factories to be built "on greenfield sites".

In the meantime, the SS representatives had also realized how economically sensible it was to relocate such operations into the existing concentration camps. In Pohl's mind, a hitherto "empty factory" was to be removed from the concentration camps.

"manned with the required number of prisoners [...]" and then run as an "SS armaments operation". As Pohl reported the following day to the

²⁰ Cf. Spoerer, Company, Appendix.

²¹ Cf. Mommsen/Grieger, Volkswagenwerk, p. 496 et seq.

²² Itz, MA-285, p. 2807 ff., Pohl to Himmler, 16.9.1942.

As the Reichsführer-SS reported, the head of the Armaments Office, Saur, had already decisively opposed such an agreement during the meeting. However, he was only anticipating the completely negative attitude of the private companies and the responsible Wehrmacht authorities, who did not want to accept such an expansion of Himmler's sphere of influence. Just a few days later, Speer therefore urged Himmler's government during the Führer's meeting from 20 to September 22, 1942 on a different solution²³. To do this, Himmler now had to completely abandon his original demand and accept that new camps would be set up directly at the armaments factories, which he finally agreed to do with Hitler's mediation²⁴. However, the decisive factor for the "Führer's decision" was probably less Speer's better arguments than the fact that Sauckel, as General Plenipotentiary for Labor Deployment (GBA), had promised to bring foreign workers into the armaments factories of the Reich territory, which had just been made "free of Jews", instead of the Jews offered by Himmler.

It seems as if the example of IG Auschwitz had shown Pohl the way to this agreement. In June 1942, after constant pressure from the IG management, it had already been agreed to build a separate camp to house the prisoners used on the construction site. Just one day after the new agreement with Speer, Pohl visited the facility in Auschwitz, probably to get a better idea of future developments²⁵. In Auschwitz, the practice of "borrowing" prisoners for a fee, which had now been established, had already been practised for more than a year for the financial benefit of the Reich treasury. With the agreement between Himmler and Speer, the principle demanded by the factory management from the outset that the workers should be accommodated as close as possible to their place of work had become established. The "beneficial" cooperation between the SS and the IG in Auschwitz thus probably served as a model for the subsequent establishment of countless subcamps at armaments factories.

Following the example of the "Buna camp", so-called satellite camps were set up at armaments companies in the following two years, with an increasing tendency. By the end of 1944, a network of around 1,000 such camps covered the entire Reich territory, varying in size from around 20 to several thousand inmates²⁶. With the approximately 1,000,000 people housed in the concentration camps in the fall of 1942, the planned "manning" of the large number of armaments factories would not have been possible. As with the change in the function of the concentration camp system in the second half of the 1930s, the transition to the phase of economic utilization of inmate labour therefore also resulted in increased incarceration activity²⁷. To this end, the group of persons was again expanded.

²³ Cf. Herbert, *Labor*, p. 406.

²⁴ Cf. Pingel, *Häftlinge*, p. 125 f. and note 30.

²⁵ StA Frankfurt a.M., criminal case 4 Ks 2/63, folder 26, p. 92 ff.

²⁶ On the subcamps of KL Auschwitz, see Chapter III.

²⁷ Himmler was at pains, however, to avoid giving the impression that "we arrest people or, if they are arrested, keep them inside in order to have workers". He therefore emphasized to Pohl that "the questions of detention review and the educational purpose for those to be educated in the concentration camp remained unchanged." IfZ, MA-306. p. 2896.

who were to be housed in the concentration camps. Only a few days after the agreement with Speer, Himmler reached an agreement with the Reich Minister of Justice, Thierack, on the "extradition of asocial elements from the penal system" to the

SS. In the order of their hierarchical position in the ideological world view of the Nazi state, "those in preventive detention" were therefore to be "completely handed over",

Jews, Gypsies, Russians and Ukrainians, Poles over three years' imprisonment, Czechs or Germans over eight years' imprisonment as decided by the Minister of Justice"²⁸.

While initially, in accordance with Hitler's wishes, non-Jewish prisoners were primarily used in the factories on Reich territory, this principle was abandoned as the labor shortage continued. After the start of systematic deportations and the dissolution of the ghettos in mid-1942, Jews made up an increasingly large proportion of the concentration camp prisoners. Up to 80 percent of them lost their lives immediately after their arrival in the extermination camps; the SS only granted a reprieve to those who were deemed fit for work. They soon made up the majority of the prisoners ruthlessly exploited in the armaments factories.

As a result of these measures, the number of people under the control of the Reichsführer SS increased considerably. Initially, growth was slow, with the number of camp inmates rising from around 60,000 to 90,000 by the end of 1942. One year later, there were already 300,000 people in the SS camps, by mid-1944 over 500,000 and finally over 700,000 at the beginning of 1945²⁹. The immense increase in the number of prisoners in the last two years of the war led to a further deterioration in working and living conditions in the camps. However, this was now only partly due to a deliberate intensification of the extermination pressure by the SS. Rather, the rapidly progressing material bankruptcy of the regime prevented the camps from being supplied even remotely adequately for the number of prisoners.

The importance of the prisoner program, which was greatly expanded in the last two years of the war

However, the importance of the use of labor in the German arms industry should not be overestimated: At the end of 1944, around 25 million workers and employees were employed in the entire German economy³⁰. Even if one assumes a high figure of 500,000 concentration camp prisoners deployed in the economy, they never accounted for more than two percent of the available labor potential. If their low labor productivity is also taken into account, their actual share of production output was probably less than one percent at any given time. In some sectors, however, their share was considerable, and certain "prestige objects" would have been unthinkable without the use of prisoners in the last phase of the war. The relocation of factories to underground tunnel systems and many construction projects of the Todt organization could only be realized on the basis of prisoner labour. The lack of material and equipment supplies could be compensated for by human labor, which was not taken care of.

²⁸ Nümbg. doc, case VI, PS-654, discussion at the **RFSS**, 18.9. 1942; cf. also Pingel, *Häftlinge*, p. 129.

²⁹ Figures according to Pingel, *Häftlinge*, p. 129 f.

³⁰ Cf. Herbert, Europe, p. 7.

had to be built. The enormous time pressure under which the new plants were built was not hindered by any safety regulations or restrictions on working hours. As a result, the living conditions of the people employed there sank to an unprecedented level. The IG Auschwitz plant was also a role model in this respect and a little ahead of its time. In Monowitz, the IG and SS developed a system of prisoner exploitation that resolved the conflict of interests between the use of labor (production) and the "final solution" (destruction) in a perfect way.

The building site from November 1942

After the commissioning of the "Buna camp", the construction management of IG Auschwitz was able to deploy prisoners again in November 1942 for the first time since July. The new transports arriving in quick succession considerably increased the number of workers on the construction site³¹. Despite the absence of camp inmates, significant progress had been made there in the months since the camp closure. The barrack camps had now reached a capacity of 15,000 beds and were to be further expanded to 23,000. The construction of the production facilities had also made considerable progress, so that the construction management was now able to set dates for the start of production of the individual production units: From July 1, 1943, the methanol plant was to "start up" with an initial 45 000 tons per year and a second stage was to be added six months later. Acetaldehyde was to be available from September 1, 1943, and isooctane two months later. For the Montan plant, the start of production was scheduled for July 1, 1944³². Interestingly, there was no mention of the completion of the Buna factory in this list, from which the colloquial name of the chemical plant was derived.

In contrast, the efforts of the IG-Bau management to recruit additional workers in the meantime showed only moderate success. Although the "Aktion im General gouvernement" had brought a further 700 Poles to Auschwitz, the total number of construction workers had remained roughly the same³³. In order to fulfill the expansion plans on time, the workforce had to increase considerably. During the aforementioned visit by Obergruppenführer Pohl to the Auschwitz plant on the afternoon of September 23, 1942, Otto Ambros and Walther Dürrfeld therefore took the opportunity to point out their "labor deployment concerns". Among other things, Pohl then promised to work towards the allocation of qualified skilled workers from other concentration camps and winter clothing³⁴.

After the use of prisoners had actually resumed in November 1942, the construction management suddenly found itself facing completely unfamiliar difficulties. The planned expansion of the employment of camp inmates to 4,000 men put IG Auschwitz in need of justification vis-à-vis the labor deployment authorities. Because in the offices of the Reich Ministry for

³¹ BAB, R 8128/A 1992, p. 110 f., Construction progress report of the synthesis section of IG Auschwitz, 5.12.1942.

³² Nümbg. doc. NI- 11139, 21st construction meeting, 3.11.1942, p. 9.

³³ Nümbg. doc. NI- 11139, 21st construction meeting, 3.11.1942: Total number of construction workers: 10 962, p. 7 f.

³⁴ Nümbg. doc. NI- 14489, 70/71. weekly report. 4.10.1942.

Arms and ammunition, the opinion now prevailed that the allocation of concentration camp prisoners would lead to an "oversaturation of the construction site with labor". IG Auschwitz was apparently able to assert itself against the planned withdrawal of around 2,000 workers with vehement objections³⁵. While the management was able to prevent further delays with its negotiating skills and good relations, construction progress stalled in December due to the onset of frost. According to chief engineer Faust, "the cold had a devastating effect on some days", as many workers sought shelter from the wintry temperatures at fireplaces.

In view of the completely inadequate clothing of the prisoners - but also of most of the foreign workers - this behavior is hardly surprising. However, the management of IG Auschwitz had little understanding for this and ordered the intervention of IG-Werkschutz. Although the latter took rigorous action and the inmates from

their barracks and shelters, up to 2,770 "strollers" were allegedly counted on one day³⁶. Quite apart from the question of whether the IG deliberately exaggerated this figure, it should be noted that work progressed very slowly until the end of January 1943. The "start-up dates" were therefore delayed: methanol production was to start two months later, isooctane production one and a half months later and acetaldehyde production one month later. The "complete commissioning of all production stages" of the Buna plant was now scheduled for May 1944³⁷.

However, these delays do not seem to have caused too much concern in the factory management. In any case, plant manager Dürrfeld had enough leisure time to organize a driven hunt on the Dwory estate, which belonged to the IG factory premises³⁸. The purpose of this leisure activity was probably, on the one hand, to consolidate and expand the contacts between the eleven participating IG members and the

leaders of the surrounding industrial companies and the concentration camp. A real friendship seems to have developed between Dürrfeld and the Monowitz camp leader, Schöttl, which also included their wives³⁹. On the other hand, five days before Christmas Eve 1942, it was probably also intended to demonstrate that Germans now saw themselves as masters of Eastern Upper Silesia. The great importance attached to this social event is evident from the fact that it was reported in detail in the weekly report of IG Auschwitz. "The event satisfied all participants in the best way", it said, but Dürrfeld, who was proclaimed "King of the Hunt", was probably the most pleased. At the "Schüsseltreiben" in the "Feierabendhaus, Zum geschliffenen Pokal", it was apparently intended to demonstrate to the town of Auschwitz, which was perceived as so "uncivilized", what the new masters understood German culture to be.

³⁵ Nümbg. doc. NI-14525, 76th/77th weekly report, 15.11.1942.

³⁶ Nümbg. doc. NI-14532, 80/81st weekly report, 13.12.1942.

³⁷ Nümbg. doc. NI-11140, 22nd construction meeting, January 21, 1943, p. 2 f.

³⁸ Nümbg. doc. NI-15102, 82nd/83rd weekly report, 27.12.1942. The hunt took place on 19.12.1942.

³⁹ Nümbg. doc. NI-14723, statement by Braus, August 19, 1947, remark by the interrogating officer, p. 3.

Attempts to increase productivity

The performance of the prisoners who had been working on the construction site again since the beginning of November had not met the IG's expectations. Only 60 to 70 percent of them – measured against the size of the camp – were actually available at the workplaces, as a considerable number were still busy expanding the camp or were ill⁴⁰. The mere erection of barracks directly on the factory premises had therefore – as skeptics had already expected in the summer of 1942⁴¹ – not brought the desired success. The construction management of IG Auschwitz therefore thought about other ways to increase the productivity of the prisoners.

On February 10, 1943, SS-Obersturmbannführer Maurer came to Auschwitz to inspect the camp and the construction site. An agreement was reached, the consequences of which would only become apparent over the course of the next two years. In addition to a further increase in the prisoner contingent, Maurer promised, according to Chief Engineer Faust's report, "that all weak prisoners could be removed so that the guarantee of almost full performance, compared to a German unskilled worker, could be extracted"⁴². This agreement between IG and WVHA formed the basis for the establishment of the rigorous selection system that was introduced in the infirmary and throughout the Monowitz camp in the course of 1943. Until then, Dürrfeld had been dependent on the camp commandant's willingness to comply with his requests for "fresh" workers. Through the agreement with Maurer, however, IG Auschwitz now had a de facto claim to capable inmate laborers. Due to the changed war situation and the increasing importance of armaments production, the industry's negotiating position had obviously become much stronger.

After the fundamental agreement between Speer and Himmler on the framework data for the use of prisoners in private industry, the decision-makers in the WVHA were generally much more open to economic arguments in the spring of 1943. The IG's suggestions on how to deploy prisoners more efficiently were now met with a much quicker response. The company representatives' complaint that the number of inmates was increasing too slowly led to another visit by Maurer to Auschwitz in March, just one month later, this time accompanied by SS-Obergruppenführer Schmitt⁴³. At this time, 3 517 prisoners were working on the construction site, whereas the IG had planned for 4 500. In order to compensate for the "usual" absences due to quarantine and illness in the future, it was agreed to expand the "Buna camp" to 5,000 and then 6,000 places by the middle of the year. However, the complete lack of timber initially hindered the further expansion of the camp in Monowitz. In order to be able to use the arriving prisoners on the construction site, the construction management had two tents erected. After the harsh winter, which had caused many delays, the spring of 1943 went well.

⁴⁰ Nuremberg doc. NI- I II 40, 22nd construction meeting, 2 I. I. 1943, P. 6.

⁴¹ Nuremberg doc. NI- I I I 37, 19th construction meeting, 13.7. 1942, p. 7.

⁴² Nuremberg doc. NI- 14546, 90./91. weekly report, 21.12. 1943.

⁴³ Nuremberg doc. NI- 14547, 94th/95th weekly report, 21.3. 1943. The visit took place on 19.3. 1943.

This was a success for the factory management: their demands on the WVHA to optimize and expand the use of prisoners had been met practically without compromise. In June, Dürrfeld also expressed his satisfaction that "the deployment of prisoners is now working much better"⁴⁴. However, his positive summary was not only due to smoother cooperation with the WVHA, but also to internal efforts within the factory.

At the same time, the management of IG Auschwitz had developed a great deal of activity to make the use of prisoners on their construction site more efficient through internal changes. They proceeded systematically: First of all, a precise and permanent analysis and control of the work detachments was to uncover the causes of the lack of productivity. The foremen of the IG therefore had to state a daily work output percentage for each individual prisoner, measured against the output of a free worker. If this value fell below about

60 percent, the prisoner ran the risk of being classified as unfit for work or punished with strokes of the cane for laziness in the camp⁴⁵. In addition, the IG deployed inspectors who went from workplace to workplace and took notes on the actual work performance of the individual commandos⁴⁶. If they discovered an alleged or actual underperformance, this could result in penalties for the person concerned, including transfer to a coal mine or confinement in a

the labor education camp. To give the management an accurate overview of the prisoner deployment as a whole, the collected data was regularly converted into graphs⁴⁷. These represented in particular the

The development of the number of workers, the sickness rate and the food supply is shown at⁴⁸. Dürrfeld and his managers thus had a very clear picture of what was happening on the construction site. The consequences of each cold snap and each individual selection could be read precisely from these diagrams. In addition, the statistical evaluations and representations served

also to inform the Technical Committee and the Management Board at the Group headquarters in Frankfurt⁴⁹. With precise documentation, it was also much easier for Ambros and Dürrfeld to justify the delays in construction, as they were able to prove the "objective" difficulties.

The factory management recognized two main problems as obstacles on the way to increasing efficiency: firstly, the performance of the prisoners provided by the SS did not meet the expectations of the IG from the outset, and secondly, there were difficulties during their deployment on the construction site. The first point was repeatedly discussed in the construction meetings and led to frequent "notifications" to the SS that only "healthy" and "fit" prisoners were to be deployed.

to send "employable" prisoners to work at IG Auschwitz⁵⁰.

⁴⁴ Nuremberg doc. NI- 1 1 142, 24th construction meeting, 22.6. 1 943, p. 7.

⁴⁵ Nuremberg Doc. NI-1 1051, Wagner testimony, Sept. 3, 1947, p. 1 f.

⁴⁶ Nuremberg Doc. NI- 1 0824, Kohn testimony, 29.5. 1 947, p. 4.

⁴⁷ Unfortunately, these have not survived.

⁴⁸ Nuremberg doc. NI- 1 472 1, statement by Braus, 1 9.8. 1 947, p. 1.

⁴⁹ Nuremberg doc. NI-4999, Struss testimony, 27.3. 1 947, p. 1.

⁵⁰ Nuremberg Doc. NI-9820, Santo statement, 1.3. 1 947, p. 7.

The construction management also criticized the high fluctuation within the commandos, which made it impossible to efficiently employ trained prisoners at one workplace. Despite many requests and protests, the SS did not adequately fulfill both requests⁵¹. In order to better enforce the IG standards in dealing with the prisoners, IG employees subsequently took part in selections when the prisoners were marched out of the camp, sometimes even Dürrfeld himself⁵². Anyone they deemed too weak was noted down and placed in the transferred to the "protection block". The majority of the people selected in this way then fell victim to the next selection in the HKB or in the camp. Later on, through this direct involvement in selections for the gas chambers, the management became complicit in the murder of prisoners.

However, the presence of IG employees did not always mean that a "negative" selection of weakened prisoners was imminent. From mid-1943 onwards, factory employees also came to the camp in order to supply smaller contingents of prisoners for special

The SS was apparently unable to assign prisoners to work detachments according to their qualifications⁵³. In some cases, as the WVHA was aware from the outset, this may have been the case,

However, this was less due to the inability of the camp administration than to the fact that "the camp commanders kept the special workers to themselves"⁵⁴.

Even before the Monowitz camp was completed, the IG had insisted on increasing the ratio of guards to workers. To ensure that the number of prisoners deployed did not continue to depend directly on the SS guards available, the factory premises were fenced in and equipped with watchtowers.

After completion of the "factory enclosure", the SS only guarded the outer perimeter and sent patrols through the construction site⁵⁵. Further fencing inside the factory premises" was intended to eventually increase the ratio of guards to prisoners to 1:40⁵⁶. At the same time, however, the management endeavored to increase the supervision of the prisoners with its own staff. Only in this way, it was believed from the first winter on the construction site

The company's security service had to be able to maintain or increase work performance even under unfavorable conditions⁵⁷. To ensure this, it was planned to increase the number of plant security personnel.

A large number of IG employees were obviously impressed and inspired by the efforts of their superiors to increase labor productivity.

⁵¹ Nümbg. doc. NI-15131, Schneider statement, 14.7. 1947.

⁵² Nümbg. doc. NI-4827, Treister statement, 3.3. 1947, p. 1.

⁵³ Nümbg. doc. NI- 10824, Kohn statement, 29.5. 1947, p. 4.

⁵⁴ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 066, Sommer statement, 8. 1 0.1 946, p. 4. Maurer was already aware of this circumstance, which stood in the way of the employment of prisoners based on economic concerns, in the spring of 1942. His attempts to stop this personal abuse by SS leaders were only moderately successful.

⁵⁵ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 4523, 53rd weekly report, 14.6. 1942.

⁵⁶ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 1 1 40, 22nd construction meeting, 21. 1. 1943, p. 6.

⁵⁷ Nümbg. doc. NI-1 1 1 30, 14th construction meeting, 16.1 2.1 941, p. 5.

While some used physical violence to drive the inmates to work harder, others tried to do so with psychological pressure, using unrestrained

The inmates expressed in a flowery way that "there is no interest in people who cannot or do not want to work full time"⁵⁸. What this meant in practice was all too clear to the prisoners. In order to dispel any scruples among the factory workers, the IG management repeatedly had it pointed out "in factory roll calls and meetings arranged especially for this purpose" that "the prisoners were criminals of the lowest kind and that every means was justified to force the prisoners to work"⁵⁹. This indoctrination does not appear to have been unsuccessful, as according to prisoner reports, "the behavior of a large proportion of the German factory workers" subsequently took place "in this manner". Nevertheless, Dürrfeld did not assume that all "motivational possibilities" for increasing prisoner productivity had already been exhausted. After positive experiences with other workers, consideration was now also given to making "concentration camp work" more efficient through material incentives.

Since mid-1942, the senior employees of IG Auschwitz had been discussing the introduction of a piecework system for the inmates as well. For an over They had planned bonuses for average performance, which were to be granted in the form of food or visits to brothels. In special cases, they even considered the "prospect of freedom" as a reward⁶⁰. Naturally, the latter met with staunch resistance from the SS representatives with whom these ideas were discussed, as it would have encroached too far on the authority of the SS. This was probably an important reason why the implementation of these plans took a long time. It was not until almost a year later, in May 1 943, that the ~~WVHA~~ finally issued a "service regulation" that allowed good work performance to be rewarded with benefits. These were to include prison relief, food allowances, tobacco, cash bonuses and permission to visit brothels⁶¹. In essence, the IG proposals were implemented, but they did not fulfill the hoped-for purpose.

Based on the example of other labor groups, the bonus regulations did not take into account the specific conditions in the concentration camp. On Due to the highly hierarchical organization of prisoner society, there was no equal access to living and recreational resources⁶². The vast majority of the prisoners deployed in the Buna labor detachments belonged to the lowest class of camp inmates and had to vegetate under correspondingly miserable living conditions. It was precisely this group that should have been given bonuses in the form of additional food by the IG to enable them to achieve a higher standard of living.

⁵⁸ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 2069, Herzog statement, Oct. 21, 1947.

⁵⁹ Nümbg. doc. NI-9808, Posener statement, 3.6. 1 947, p. 7.

⁶⁰ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1451 0, 54th weekly report, 7.6. 1 942.

⁶¹ APMO, Dpr. Mau/12, WVHA Dienstvorschrift, 15.5. 1 943. The food allowances were allocated, for example, in the form of potato salad or once or twice as apple juice. Nümbg. doc. NI-981 0, Aus sage Reinhold, 19.8.1 947, p. 13.

⁶² Cf. chapter III.3.

performance if there was to be an increase in productivity. In the reality of life in the camp, however, these people had hardly any opportunity to benefit from bonuses. Although all prisoners were registered for the bonus system, only around 15 percent of all prisoners benefited from it Prisoners⁶³. These were almost exclusively foremen, kapos and other "notables"⁶⁴, whom Dünfeld also wanted to make recognizable by means of "sleeve stripes"⁶⁵. The "ordinary" prisoners, although they had to do the hardest work, generally received no or only very small bonuses and were no better off than before.

On the contrary, for the vast majority, the introduction of the premium system meant a further deterioration in living conditions. Due to the increasing supply problems and the shrinkage within the camp For example, the additional rations granted for good work performance were at least partially taken from the existing rations⁶⁶. For the many already weakened prisoners, this led to a further deterioration of their meagre meals. Only those who were still strong because they had only been in the camp for a short time or had fought their way to a functional post benefited from the performance-based rations. For the vast majority of prisoners in the subcamps, on the other hand, it led to a further increase in selection pressure.

In addition to buying extra food, the premium coupons also allowed them to visit the brothel, although this was not possible for the Reich Germans and others.

was reserved for "celebrities". As a rule, it was mainly "green" prisoners who made use of it, giving little thought to the fate of their female fellow prisoners⁶⁷. They mainly vented their sexual energy on female prisoners.

The SS also used Polish prisoners from the Auschwitz main camp who had been forced into prostitution. "Red" prisoner functionaries therefore generally refused to exercise this "privilege" granted by the SS⁶⁸. However, it is said that there were also female prisoners in the camp brothels who clearly preferred their work to the hard labor in the satellite camps. In fact, their living conditions were much better than in the Auschwitz women's camps. The brothel was located on the Monowitz camp grounds and also served as accommodation for the 20 or so women working there⁶⁹. They received 90 pfennigs of the one Reichsmark fee paid by the visiting inmate; the rest went to the ^{supervisor}⁷⁰.

⁶³ Nuremberg doc. NI-1 1 143, 25th construction meeting, 9.9. 1 943, p. 7.

⁶⁴ This was even known to the IG employees responsible for this. Nuremberg doc. NI-98 10, Reinhold statement, 19.8. 1 947, S. 13.

⁶⁵ Maurer rejected this request, which further emphasized the differences between the prisoner categories. would have, however. Nuremberg doc. NI- 1 0849, Maurer to Dünfeld, 19.4. 1 944, p. 2.

⁶⁶ Nuremberg doc. NI-1 1654, Rosenberg statement, 8.5. 1 947, p. 4.

⁶⁷ The "green" camp capo Emil Worgul is said to have been "one of the special lovers of the brothel". **APMO**, Osw/Posener/ 14, Posener statement, p. 32.

⁶⁸ Cf. Pingel, Häftlinge, p. 1 66 f.

⁶⁹ Nuremberg doc. NI-98 10, Reinhold statement, 19.8. 1 947, p. 13.

⁷⁰ IfZ, Fa- 183/ 1, p. 99 f., addendum, 14.2. 1 944, to the WVHA service regulation concerning the premium regulation, 15.5.1 943.

The introduction of performance-related benefits was therefore unable to increase the general work performance of the prisoner detachments, but only contributed to the further differentiation of living conditions in the camp. The management also clearly misjudged the conditions under which performance incentives could have an effect. Only workers whose living conditions made it possible to fulfill the usual work requirements without any problems could be persuaded to increase productivity through material incentives.

While the bonus system was not really interested in improving the supply situation of the "ordinary" prisoners, the management concentrated on the "tried and tested" methods of extracting the last of the manpower after the pre-programmed failure: The extension of prisoner working hours, which had already been demanded by the construction companies working for the IG in May 1943⁷¹, was finally made mandatory by the WVHA in November. Now, regardless of the external circumstances, prisoners were to work at least eleven hours a day⁷². Something was also to be done about the "declining work ethic" of the prisoners noted by the IG-Bauleitung. Since, according to the new GBA regulations, a manual

tangible incitement to work had now once again been explicitly criminalized, the management at least demanded a tougher approach from the Gestapo⁷³.

The WVHA obviously also believed that it had been too lax in its treatment of the prisoners. In any case, just a few weeks later the SS commanders a warning to take more decisive care of the prisoners' work performance⁷⁴. In February 1944, the new commandant of KL Auschwitz, Arthur Liebehenschel, finally attempted to put into practice the reorientation towards the new economic objectives that the WVHA had been demanding since 1942. He diagnosed that the "responsible SS ranks" still lacked an understanding of the economic necessities of war in the concentration camps⁷⁵. In order to better meet these needs, Liebehenschel called for permanent supervision on the one hand, but also for the treatment of prisoners to be based on economic expediency on the other. In order to make it unmistakably clear to his SS officers and ranks how the prisoners' ability to work could be increased and maintained, he compiled a whole catalog of rules of conduct in a special order:

1. As before, there is only one roll call during the day, which lasts no longer than 10-15 minutes.
2. Leisure time is used to recover used labor; this includes sufficient sleep. Unnecessary and even harassing demands on prisoners in their free time are not permitted. Violations of this are to be punished with the strictest penalties.

⁷¹ Nilmbg. doc. NI-151 13, 96/97th Weekly Report, 4/4 1 943.

⁷² Nilmbg. doc. NO- 1 290, WVHA letter to KL, 22.1 1.1 943.

⁷³ APMO, D-Au III, Tygodniowe Sprawozdania (IG Farben), 1 26th/127th weekly report, 31.1 0.1 943.

⁷⁴ IfZ, Fa-506/1 2, circular letter WVHA to KL, 8. 12.1943.

⁷⁵ On this and the following: Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 5201, special order, 14.2. 1 944, p. 1 -3.

3. The highest attention must be paid to food, i.e. every prisoner must really get what he is entitled to. [...]
4. The condition of clothing must be constantly monitored, especially footwear.
5. Remove sick prisoners in good time. It is better to stay in the infirmary for a short time with appropriate medical treatment and then return to work healthy than to stay at work sick for a long time without working.
6. The industrious prisoner should be given every possible relief, increased until freedom is regained; the lazy, incorrigible prisoner should receive the severity of all possible punishments."

Apart from the last point, which was never applied to ordinary prisoners anyway, Liebehenschel's list basically contains only self-evident things. The fact that the commandant felt it necessary to point these out explicitly sheds a telling light on the lack of basic necessities of life in the Auschwitz camps. A meticulous implementation of his proposals could have brought about drastic changes to the living and working conditions in the Monowitz camp. The result of such a reorganization of the actual camp area according to economic rules would possibly have meant an improvement for some prisoners working in the inner detachments. For the vast majority, however, the transformation into a labor camp, albeit a very harsh one, would have been a significant improvement. However, even after Liebehenschel's order, there was no fundamental change in the treatment of the prisoners. Although the arbitrary mistreatment continued to decrease, this did not mean an end to the beatings. Prisoners continued to be driven by Kapos and SS supervisors, and not only verbally; however, this mistreatment was now in the service of the

Increase in productivity. The function of terror changed without losing its effect of rapid debilitation⁷⁶.

For many members of the SS guards, this change in the way prisoners were treated was probably of little significance anyway. For years, the SS leadership had indoctrinated them to act with the utmost severity against opponents of the regime. And in Auschwitz, they were directly confronted with the industrial murder of European Jews on a daily basis. In the minds of most of the SS men, the lives of the Jewish prisoners in particular therefore counted for nothing. Convincing these guards, who were the only ones who came into direct contact with the inmates, of the new economic goals of the WVHA was therefore inevitably difficult. It was de facto impossible to change their behavior, which had been trained over a long period of time to focus on discipline, security and elimination.

The replacement of Liebehenschel and the return of Höss as site manager at the beginning of May 1944 ended the brief phase of focusing on economic goals. The large-scale extermination operations that were then to take place in Auschwitz required

⁷⁶ Cf. Pingel, *Häftlinge*, p. 134.

apparently the experience of the old commandant again. After the tasks of the concentration camp had temporarily been characterized more by the production of armaments, at least outwardly, the actual goal of the SS came to the fore again: the destruction of the main ideological enemy. It was therefore not the prisoners' work performance that was increased, but the capacity of the gas chambers and crematoria in Birkenau.

At the latest with the arrival of the first of countless subsequent transports of Hungarian Jews from mid-May 1944⁷⁷, the pressure from the IG to replace prisoners who were unfit for work with fresh and strong prisoners increased even further. The management of IG Auschwitz had now completely switched from a qualitative to a purely quantitative approach to labor. The number of prisoners brought to Monowitz and deployed on the factory premises reached its peak. From this point onwards, there was no longer any economic justification for the IG managers to keep the sickness rate low by improving the care of the prisoners. The obviously unlimited supply of new workers allowed total exploitation of the workforce in the shortest possible time, as the worn-out "work tools"⁷⁸ could be exchanged for new ones after use - a wasteful approach that was only possible in Auschwitz in view of the increasing shortage of workers everywhere else in the Reich. In the eyes of the armaments managers there, the production factor "human labor", which was considered valuable in profit-oriented companies, had been transformed into a mere consumable. Only highly specialized workers were exempt from this deadly system.

The situation on the construction site after the end of the war

While the management of IG Auschwitz was busy increasing the labor productivity of its workforce, the general war situation had changed radically compared to the time when construction began. While the armaments planners in Berlin had originally regarded Auschwitz as an area safe from air raids, the strategic situation was completely different after the end of the Wehrmacht's successes. After the lost battle of Stalingrad, the German armies on the eastern front were primarily involved in rearguard actions. The Western Allies had also taken over the initiative in the war effort, now that the American armaments machinery was operating at full power. It was therefore clear to the factory management that the Upper Silesian industrial area would be within range of Allied aircraft in the foreseeable future. In the early summer of 1943, therefore, the company began to think about securing the construction and factory site in Auschwitz against attacks from the air. After a short time, 2,000 men were already engaged in air raid protection activities; from September 1943, 27 F1 barrels were to be ready for firing, for which 110 anti-aircraft gunners were trained. In order to prevent the approach of enemy air

⁷⁷ Cf. above all the publications of Randolph Braham; for example: *hes, Destruction*, p. 456 ff. The first transport of Hungarian Jews arrived in Auschwitz on April 29, 1944. The majority of the approximately 438,000 Hungarians deported to Auschwitz arrived there between May 17 and July 9, 1944; see Piper, *Zahl*, p. 182.

⁷⁸ Nümbg. doc. NI-14287, Rossbach statement, 21.1.1948, p. 5.

To make it more difficult for aircraft to enter the immediate IG premises, 126 barrage balloons were ordered and ^{approved}⁷⁹. However, the plant management did not yet expect any immediate threat from the air; their efforts were therefore initially focused on

above all to further accelerate work on the production buildings. The deadlines for some parts of the plant, which were postponed again in March 1943, were maintained until the summer, indicating that sufficient manpower was available.

While the total workforce in the spring was around 17,000⁸⁰, it rose steadily to 26,000 by September. In the meantime, the provision of sufficient construction and assembly personnel for IG Auschwitz was also ensured by the fact that Krauch had appointed their plant manager as "Commissioner of GBChem. for the deployment of labor" on the Upper Silesian construction sites⁸¹. In this function,

Dürrfeld was directly responsible for the "correct distribution" and "sensible allocation" of the available manpower to all chemical armaments plants in the region. The background to this decision was the realization that the ancillary plants (especially power plants) urgently needed for the commissioning of the large chemical plants had often been disadvantaged in the allocations until then. His attention was therefore now focused on coordinating the timing of the projects and allocating the workforce accordingly.

Dürrfeld also aimed to further increase the workforce at IG Auschwitz, where craftsmen in particular were still urgently needed, but the accommodation options on the factory premises had already reached their limits. Instead, the number of prisoners deployed on the construction site had risen sharply and now amounted to 5,400 out of a total camp strength of 6,500 men. Despite the highest labor force figures to date, the need for construction and assembly personnel had become ever more pressing. The intensification of air protection measures in particular led to delays in all other construction phases. The need for personnel was immense, as the safety measures that had been postponed during the planning phase in spring 1941 now had to be made up for at short notice: The site management wanted to have 30 meters of anti-splinter trenches dug per day, the total length of which was projected at 8,000 meters; the number of 48 barrage balloons already installed was to be doubled; 12 fire extinguishing ponds had already been completed and nine more were under construction; the construction of ambulances at strategic locations on the factory site was also planned. In addition to their other operational duties, the plant management called on all German employees to provide air protection. Due to the large distances on the construction site, this inevitably had an inhibiting effect on the workflow: For example, an "air raid helper" had to travel up to an hour from the workplace to the "balloon defense" site⁸².

The supply situation became increasingly critical in the course of 1943, and even the "civilian" workers could hardly be provided with the appropriate clothing and equipment.—

⁷⁹ Nümbg. doc. NI-11142, 24th construction meeting, 22.6.1943, p. 10.

⁸⁰ Nümbg. doc. NI-11141, 23rd construction meeting, 24.3.1943, p. 5.

⁸¹ Nümbg. doc. NI-10566, Diekmann statement, 4.9.1947, p. 2 ff.

⁸² Nümbg. doc. NI-11143, 25th construction meeting, 9.9.1943, p. 11.

the necessary tools. Even the food rations for the German workers were now quite meagre. The yield of 10 acres of asparagus fields near Libiaz, which the management had cultivated from May 1943, is unlikely to have improved the situation significantly⁸³. The noble crop was presumably intended as a reward for a small circle of selected employees.

However, the management of IG Auschwitz hoped that another visit from the head of the WVHA, Pohl, would bring some relief to the overall supply situation. During the factory tour on August 17, 1943, Pohl was impressed by what had been achieved so far and repeated his offer of support. In addition to donating furnishings, he promised to supply 5,000 and 2,000 sets of men's and women's clothing respectively. He also wanted to support the provision of a further 17 wooden barracks⁸⁴.

In the following months, the IG actually received a large number of items of clothing from the camp administration that had been taken from the Jews deported to Auschwitz. There were probably also items from the ghettos in Sosnowitz, Katowice and Lublin⁸⁵. "It was women's, men's and children's clothing", as one IG employee later recalled, a total of around 25,000 items, for which the SS received around 100,000 RM⁸⁶. After the "disinfestation" of the clothes, the factory management initially had a considerable amount distributed to the Eastern workers, who often only had a torn shirt and a pair of trousers and were therefore completely inadequately protected from the frosty weather in the cold season. The remaining items were eventually sold by the Department of Economic Enterprises to IG members⁸⁷. The prisoners, who were most in need of a few warm jackets and coats, could at best obtain some of this special supply on the camp's black market.

With the increase in the workforce, there was also a shift within the nationality structure of IG Auschwitz. In particular, the proportion of Germans in the workforce fell steadily, mainly due to further conscription for military service; of the 26,000 employees, only a good 10 percent were German in September 1943, in absolute figures 2825⁸⁸. Of these, 40 percent fell into the category of so-called Volksdeutsche⁸⁹. Maintaining work discipline in line with the management's expectations appeared to the IG managers to be seriously jeopardized by this. Faust therefore frequently complained about "the constant

⁸³ Nümbg. doc. NI-15 111, 102./103. weekly report, 16.5.1943.

⁸⁴ Nümbg. doc. NI-14542, 116/117th weekly report, August 22, 1943.

⁸⁵ Nümbg. doc. NI-14284, Sylla statement, 22.1.1948, p. 2.

⁸⁶ Nümbg. doc. NI-14287, Rossbach statement, 21.1.1948, p. 12.

⁸⁷ Nümbg. doc. NI-9810, Reinhold statement, 19.8.1947, p. 15.

⁸⁸ Nümbg. doc. NI-11143, 25th construction meeting, 9.9.1943, p. 9.

⁸⁹ The term "ethnic Germans" referred to people of German descent who lived outside the borders of the German Reich (within the borders of 1937) and Austria. During the Nazi era and especially after the outbreak of the Second World War, these German minorities in the countries of South-Eastern and Eastern Europe were incorporated into the Reich; see also Steinbacher, "Musterstadt" Auschwitz Ch. III.3.

declining work ethic", which was not taken seriously enough by the responsible Gestapo office⁹⁰. He demanded more resolute action to restore "order" on the construction site. The appeal to the Gestapo shows the helplessness of the IG management as to how to deal with the high numbers of escapes and other "disciplinary problems". At the same time, Faust's reaction demonstrates blindness to the actual causes of the lack of motivation among the foreign and forced laborers.

Although they continued to live in incomparably better conditions than the prisoners in the concentration camp, the accommodation and working conditions were not pleasant. Mostly deported involuntarily or lured with false promises to work for the German armaments machinery, the willingness to work was understandably limited. Far from home, without contact to their relatives, in a foreign and foreign-language environment, it was not only the hard work and the scarce rations that sapped their performance. While the Poles from the nearby Generalgouvernement coped comparatively well with the situation, partly because of the food parcels they received from home, the greater the distance from their home town, the stronger the desire to escape the barrack life in Auschwitz was likely to have been among the other nationalities.

In the second half of 1942, the "shrinkage" of so-called free workers was therefore already very high: while Eastern workers from the Generalgouvernement hardly showed any tendency to flee (6 and 1 percent respectively), 12 percent of Croats, 18 percent of Eastern workers from the territory of the USSR, 24 percent of Poles from the Generalgouvernement and 27 percent of Belgians and French had fled. At the top of the statistics, however, were the Eastern workers from the territory of the USSR, 59 percent of whom had fled⁹¹. According to these figures, women were obviously much less willing to take the risk of fleeing. The fact that only three female Eastern workers from the nearby Generalgouvernement left the barrack camp may have been due to the certainty that they would not have fared any better back home. There, too, work in German factories awaited them. Those who came from more distant areas, on the other hand, in most cases did not even know what had happened there in the meantime, so that the longing for their relatives may have driven them to flee.

A total of 1,122 workers had fled, of whom the German authorities had only been able to "repatriate" 16. The rate of workers returning from home leave was understandably very low, especially among the French and Belgians. Even a more restrictive vacation policy had not led to any "improvement"⁹², which is why the site management thought about other ways of curbing such "abuses".

⁹⁰ APMO, D-Au III, Tygodniowe Sprawozdania (IG Farben), 126./1 27th weekly report, 31. 10.1943, p. 126 f.

⁹¹ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 451 4, 70./7 1st weekly report, 4. 10. 1942.

⁹² Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 1 142, 24th construction meeting, June 22, 1943, p. 5.

2. Discipline of the prisoners by the IG

The central instrument for enforcing tougher disciplinary measures by the IG's own organs was plant security. Established at the start of construction work, there were frequent calls in construction meetings to increase its staff⁹³ in order to maintain the "internal order" of the new plant. The "IG Plant Security" with its three departments "Defense", "Investigation" and "Uniformed Plant Security" was headed by Lieutenant Colonel Niepmann, who was directly responsible to the plant manager Dürrfeld⁹⁴. The main tasks of plant security were to investigate thefts on the factory premises and to "secure all camps, with the exception of the Monowitz concentration camp"⁹⁵.

In order to lend the necessary emphasis to the instructions of the plant security staff, they were equipped with pistols and carried dogs. In addition, Plant Security was responsible for the "defense of the plant", i.e. in particular the prevention of acts of sabotage and espionage. Even when new workers were hired, Plant Security, "together with the Gestapo, checked that people were politically unobjectionable". In contrast to the other factories, IG Auschwitz maintained its own prison for the safekeeping of suspects. In addition, by agreement between the mayor of Auschwitz, Mr. Butz, and the factory management, there were a number of criminal police officers on the factory premises, who, as one former IG employee put it, "were there to keep an eye on the prisoners, "constantly interfering in everything". It was precisely this cooperation that made Plant Security few friends among the German workforce. The conduct of plant security often stood in the way of productive work. Particularly when dealing with foreign workers, Works Security was "quick to use the word sabotage" and sent allegedly suspicious persons to the Works Security prison. It was generally known that this "could be tantamount to transfer to the Auschwitz concentration camp". A careful examination of the accusations rarely took place; mere suspicion or a tip-off from an informer was sufficient.

However, as a former employee recalled, the main task of plant security was the persecution of "loafers": "The word 'dawdling' reached I.G.-Auschwitz through the, for both the Buna and Leuna parts, record-breaking efforts were particularly important, so that many punishments were meted out for cheating at work."⁹⁶ A strict approach to this issue was a personal concern of Dürrfeld. He had his orders carried out by plant security leader Sauerteig, who was "known throughout the factory premises as brutal"⁹⁷. The fact that the Gestapo had already had him transferred from Leuna to Auschwitz added to his dubious reputation. Beatings and maltreatment of alleged "loafers" were therefore commonplace at Sauerteig.

⁹³ Nuremberg doc. NI-1 1 130, 14th construction meeting, 16.12. 1941, p. 5.

⁹⁴ Nuremberg doc. NI- 10166, Lotzmann testimony, 4.9. 1947, p. 1.

⁹⁵ On this and the following: Nuremberg doc. NI- 14287, Rossbach statement, 21.1. 1948, p. 9 f.

⁹⁶ Nuremberg doc. NI- 14287, Rossbach statement, January 21, 1948, p. 11.

⁹⁷ Nuremberg doc. NI- 14287, Rossbach statement, 21.1. 1948, p. 9.

was the order of the day, but no one did anything about it because Dürrfeld covered for him⁹⁸. Sauerteig also had a strong position due to his membership of the SD. The cooperation "between plant security, Gestapo and police" was correspondingly close at the Auschwitz plant⁹⁹.

Officially, the members of Works Security, like all other IG employees, were forbidden from assaulting prisoners. If an IG foreman suspected a prisoner of theft on the factory premises, he had to report this to the head of plant security, who in turn passed the report on to camp commander Schöttl¹⁰⁰. However, this kind of merely administrative involvement of plant security was not enough for the management. Rather, Dürrfeld strove, as the former plant security employee Lotzmann reported, "to avoid handing over the respective workers to the authorities by applying internal measures", as this would unnecessarily "pull them out of the work process for a longer period of time"¹⁰¹. The IG management increasingly pushed for such a procedure from mid-1943, when more and more French workers had been lured to Auschwitz partly with empty promises and partly with coercion. In order to increase their understandably low motivation to work, Dürrfeld demanded the

"Establishment of a so-called penal colony". Although the head of plant security, Niepmann, had himself pointed out that with the forced "type of recruitment, punishment could hardly be carried out"¹⁰², he was forced to do so at the explicit The IG factory management instructed him to submit a corresponding application to the Gestapo in Bielitz.

After the uselessness of such a facility quickly became apparent, the "penal colony" was disbanded. Dürrfeld did not give up, however. Bypassing the factory security – his trust in Niepmann had evidently been broken – he had a "zbV-Kolonie" set up by the Gefolgschaftsabteilung "in agreement with the German Labor Front", into which "work stragglers" were assigned at their "own discretion"¹⁰³. Allegedly in accordance with the regulations of the Reich Trustee of Labor, the Gefolgschaftsabteilung brought "special cases of violations of work discipline and the order of work in the factory" under¹⁰⁴. This attempt to increase the motivation of forced laborers through repression soon proved to be inappropriate. After the establishment of a separate "Stapostelle" on the factory premises

The IG and Gestapo finally agreed to transfer the "loafers" to^{KL105}. Dürrfeld's disciplinary wishes were thus fulfilled, but he

⁹⁸ Nuremberg doc. NI-10166, Lotzmann testimony, 4.9. 1947, p. 1.

⁹⁹ Nuremberg doc. NI- 14287, Rossbach statement, 21.1.1948, p. 9.

¹⁰⁰ On this and the following: Nümbg. doc. NI- 10166, Statement Lotzmann, 4.9. 1947, p. 3 ff.

¹⁰¹ Nümbg. doc. NI-101 66, Lotzmann statement, 4.9. 1947, p. 2.

¹⁰² Nümbg. doc. NI- 101 66, Lotzmann statement, 4.9. 1947, p. 3.

¹⁰³ Nuremberg Doc. NI- 101 66, Lotzmann testimony, Sept. 4, 1947, p. 5.

¹⁰⁴ USHMM, reel 70, IG circular 301 1, March 30, 1944, p. 248.

¹⁰⁵ On this and the following: Nümbg. doc. NI-101 66, Lotzmann statement, 4.9. 1947, pp. 3-6.

this solution soon seemed too unproductive. At the turn of the year 1943/44, he therefore set up a labor education camp on the site of the Monowitz camp, where the labor of the "loafers" was now available to the IG without restriction. Under conditions similar to those in a concentration camp, the alleged slackers then had to carry out the hardest work on the construction site for several weeks. A large number of them fell victim to the ruthless driving of the supervisory staff before their "probationary period" had expired.

Despite such rigorous measures, plant security had already proved to be overstretched in the late summer of 1942 to contain the increasing number of mostly successful escape attempts by foreign forced laborers. While Niepmann demanded "actually 300-350 absolutely reliable plant security guards" to fulfill his tasks, he had to make do with 148 men¹⁰⁶. Even three quarters of a year later, plant security was "still the subject of the site management's greatest concern", as it was unable to fulfill its tasks given the high average age of 48¹⁰⁷. Despite repeated requests, there was no significant increase in plant security in the following period. In December 1943, the number of full-time plant security staff amounted to 166, half of whom came from two other companies. In addition, there were around 150 men who worked part-time for plant security¹⁰⁸. Apparently, the worsening shortage of German workers prevented an increase in the size of plant security, despite the recruitment of older and less trained workers.¹⁰⁹

In view of the often brutal approach of the factory guards, who sometimes "sprained their fingers" when dealing out blows¹¹⁰, the prisoners and forced laborers on the Buna site were probably spared a further escalation of the harsh working conditions.

Behavior of the IG employees towards the prisoners

Nevertheless, beatings and maltreatment of all kinds were part of everyday life for the prisoners assigned to work in the Buna works, as other IG Auschwitz employees evidently also felt called upon to discipline them with violence. Until the completion of the construction fence, which closed off the entire construction site from the outside world so that prisoners were allowed to move freely within it, the "Discipline" was mainly maintained by SS guards and Kapos. After that, the SS troops were primarily responsible for securing the construction site from the outside, while the foremen, supervisors and, of course, plant security staff of the IG were now responsible for internal order alongside the Kapos. The inadequate work performance noted since the beginning of the prisoner deployment determined the orders of the IG management. In general

¹⁰⁶ Nümbg. doc. NI-145 13, 68th/69th weekly report, 20.9. 1942.

¹⁰⁷ Nümbg. doc. NI-1 1 142, 24th construction meeting, June 22, 1943, p. 10.

¹⁰⁸ Nümbg. doc. NI-11 144, 26th construction meeting, 10.12. 1943, p. 8 f.

¹⁰⁹ Günther Lotzmann, whose testimony was referred to above, may serve as an example. Within just two years in the IG, he went through an astonishing career from ordinary worker and porter to head of the investigation department of plant security in Auschwitz.

¹¹⁰ Nümbg. doc. NI- 11642, Bayer statement, 25.9. 1947, p. I.

Dürrfeld lamented the inadequate performance of the prisoners due to insufficient food and accommodation, poor clothing and equipment as a "constantly declining work ethic" or as "work laziness"¹¹¹. In accordance with the requirements of the labor deployment authorities, such complaints had to be passed on to the responsible Gestapo office, which was done.

However, the Gestapo's approach did not meet the expectations of the IG Farben management, as it "did not work as promptly as we would have liked in dealing with questions of labor fraud."¹¹² Construction manager Faust even went so far as to claim that "they [*the Gestapo*] have not yet recognized that, what it was all about". In his eyes, the Gestapo officers, who were rarely criticized for being too restrained, had obviously not yet understood the "war-critical importance" of the synthesis plant to be completed. The company management now believed they knew better than the members of the state police how harshly the prisoners and other "loafers" were to be dealt with in order to achieve this goal.

The factory management's view on this issue had changed considerably in the two years or so of prisoner deployment up to that point. In August 1941, "the gentlemen of the concentration camp" had still been "made aware of the fact that in the last few weeks the prisoners were increasingly being are severely chastised on the construction site, and this always applies to the weakest prisoners, who really cannot do any more"¹¹³. Even at this point, however, the IG's actions were not motivated by compassion for the prisoners, as one might assume at first glance. Rather, it was based on purely economic fears, as "the extraordinarily unpleasant scenes taking place on the construction site" were beginning to have a "demoralizing effect on the free labour force (Poles) as well as on Reich Germans". The construction management therefore agreed to ask the camp administration to "refrain from these punishments on the construction site and move them to the walls of the concentration camp". Even if this hardly changed anything for the prisoners, at least the senior IG employees could imagine that the prisoner workers were being treated well on the factory premises.

In the summer of 1943, conditions had changed considerably; as the war progressed, the tone on the construction site also became harsher. The management now apparently considered it unnecessary to take into account what "foreign workers" and Germans thought about the treatment of the prisoners. Site manager Faust had meanwhile become accustomed to the sight of thousands of emaciated figures from the concentration camp and had probably slowly adopted the SS's way of dealing with these "subhumans". Indeed, he now seemed to want to enforce them more rigorously than the guards. Although Faust continued to oppose brutal excesses in which "prisoners were shot or beaten half to death on the construction site", as this was probably

¹¹¹ USHMM, reel 70, IG circular 90 11 /44 (signed Dürrfeld), February 28, 1944.

¹¹² On this and the following: APMO, D-Au III, t. I, korespondencja IG Farben, 1 26th/127th weekly report of IG Auschwitz, 31st I.O. 1943 (Chief Engineer Max Faust).

¹¹³ On this and the following: Nümbg. doc. NI- 14543, 11th weekly report, 9.8. 1941, p. 2.

would have continued to be all too detrimental to the morale of the entire workforce. However, he now took the view that "corporal punishment in moderate forms was absolutely necessary" because the guards deployed were "weak and sometimes of inferior morale" ¹¹⁴.

The workers on the construction site were able to observe Faust's view of the "right" morality, as he demonstrated its practical application with his own hands: on one occasion, he "beat several prisoners with a truncheon, as driving the loaded lorries on the road did not work out as he wanted". As the reporting witness specifically asked for the name of the beater, a clear identification is possible in this case ¹¹⁵. This incident must have made an exemplary impression on some IG employees; in any case, such mistreatment was also subsequently reported in relation to other employees ¹¹⁶. Faust's elegant manner of expression, which is characterized by a

"moderate corporal punishment", they may have forgotten. Witnesses sometimes had the impression that "the German I.G. foremen tried to outdo the SS in terms of brutality towards the prisoners" ¹¹⁷. A factory guard boasted of his beating power when he told an IG engineer that "his hand still hurt from beating the Poles and that he had even sprained his finger in the process" ¹¹⁸. Such "beatings" cannot have been isolated cases, as former prisoners describe them in many testimonies and memoirs.

Heinrich Bütelfisch, the board member responsible for the Leuna section in Auschwitz, must have had enough to discuss with Himmler personally about the "correct" treatment of concentration camp prisoners. In December 1943, as a member of the circle of friends of the Reichsführer SS, he took part in "a kind of Christmas party" at Himmler's Hochwald field command post ¹¹⁹ ¹²⁰. The subject of "foreign workers and internees" was also discussed there, where Himmler remarked that in the event of revolts, "action must be taken with all severity and by all means". During the usual individual discussions in this circle, the IG manager had the opportunity to report on his experiences from Auschwitz¹²¹. It can be assumed that this gave Bütelfisch new impetus to press ahead with the construction of the armaments factory in Auschwitz by any means necessary. After Himmler's speech, a choir of SS chants reinforced the right-wing sentiment and the solemn mood of those gathered there.

¹¹⁴ APMO, D-Au III, t. I, korespondencja IG Farben, 1 26/127th weekly report of IG Auschwitz, 31.1 0.1 943 (Chief Engineer Max Faust).

¹¹⁵ Nuremberg doc. NI-4829, statement Tauber, 3.3. 1 947, p. 2.

¹¹⁶ Nuremberg doc. NI-4830, Vitek testimony, 3.3. 1 947, p. 2 f.

¹¹⁷ Nuremberg doc. NI-9807, Wollheim testimony, 3.6. 1 947, p. 3.

¹¹⁸ Nümbg. doc. NI-11 642, Bayer statement, 25.9. 1 947, p. 1.

¹¹⁹ "Hochwald" was the code name for the field command post housed in a railroad car and several wooden barracks near the Großgarten train station near Lötzen/East Prussia; see Vogel sang, Freundeskreis, p. 92.

¹²⁰ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 064, statement by Pohl, 7. 10. 1 946, p. 3. deskreises" on 12. 12. 1 943 cf. Vogelsang, Freundeskreis, pp. 92-94.

¹²¹ Nümbg. doc. NI- 14498, statement by Schäfer, 27.2. 1 948, p. 2.

the Reichsführer SS could be sure that the illustrious circle of high SS and business leaders would follow him unswervingly on the road to "final victory" ¹²² _

While Bütelfisch was celebrating the "Yule Festival" and getting new ideas for dealing with the prisoners, the forced laborers on the Auschwitz construction site were freezing in their thin and holey clothes. During the harsh, continental winters, the cold claimed many more victims than the maltreatment by the foremen and employees of the factory. Although IG employees were usually present when the prisoners were being driven, they rarely took part in the violence. Much more frequently, however, they incited Kapos or foremen to urge the prisoners to work harder, i.e. they used the prisoner functionaries as an extended arm ¹²³ . The prisoners complied with such requests for various reasons: Some, especially Kapos from the category of "professional criminals", are likely to have used the opportunity to indulge their desire for violence and to curry favor with their civilian superiors. Others felt so pressured by completion deadlines and the supervision of the foremen that they preferred to beat the prisoners rather than take the punishment themselves for not completing their workload¹²⁴ . Still others were simply bribed by the IG employees to treat the prisoners a little more harshly ¹²⁵ .

The IG employees had various other instruments at their disposal to force prisoners to work at any cost, which made the use of prisoners inhumane overall. Even in strict compliance with the procedures prescribed by GBA Sauckel and the SS, the IG employees contributed to the unbearable working conditions. By reporting punishments to the SS, they were able to "legally" avoid beatings and transfers.

effect. Some IG masters have already filled such messages for small "Misconduct" such as warming up by a fire¹²⁶ , repeated smoking ¹²⁷ , "Laziness and rebelliousness"¹²⁸ or speaking to an Eastern worker ¹²⁹ . Sometimes all it took was a wrong look in the direction of the master - there was always a reason for a punishment report: for example, prisoners were punished with food deprivation ¹³⁰ for damage to the mine slab, even if it was not their fault.

¹²² Nuremberg Doc. NI-1064, Pohl testimony, October 7, 1946, p. 3.

¹²³ Nuremberg Doc. NI-4830, Vitek testimony, March 3, 1947, p. 2 f. Nuremberg Doc. NI-9807, Wollheim statement, 3.6.1947, p. 3. Nuremberg Doc. NI-10824, Kohn statement, May 29, 1947, p. 3. Nuremberg Doc. NI-11694, Davison statement, July 19, 1947, p. 2.

¹²⁴ Nuremberg Doc. NI-11642, Bayer testimony, Sept. 25, 1947, p. 2.

¹²⁵ Nuremberg Doc. NI-10824, Kohn statement, May 29, 1947, p. 3. Nuremberg Doc. NI-9818, statement Jakubik, 23.5. 1947, p. 4; cf. chapter IV.2.

¹²⁶ Nuremberg Doc. NI- 1 1014, punishment report against Jewish foreman, 28.2.1944; the punishment was 15 strokes of the cane and "underground work".

¹²⁷ Nuremberg doc. NI-12068, punishment report against Jewish prisoner, 1 7.9. 1 944; punishment 20 strokes of the cane.

¹²⁸ Nuremberg Doc. NI- 11016, punishment report against Jewish prisoner, 27.4.1944; punishment 15

strokes of the cane. ¹²⁹ Nuremberg Doc. NI-11029, Penalty report against Jewish prisoner , 3.6.1944; punishment 15 strokes of the cane. ¹³⁰ Nuremberg doc. NI-11654, Rosenberg statement, May 8, 1947, p. 4.

As a rule, camp inmates were threatened with up to 25 strokes of the cane or ten Sundays of hard labor (on Sundays when they were not working) for such offences. This again shows how consistently the SS's hierarchization of the prisoners worked. The punishment reports received relate exclusively to Jewish prisoners, including foremen who allowed their subordinate comrades a little rest. Such a gesture of compassion could therefore have dire consequences, even for a prisoner on work duty: A foreman, for example, who went with his men and a prisoner of war to the warming up by a fire, not only a beating, but also a transfer to a coal pit ¹³¹. Given the conditions in the camp, this was tantamount to being sentenced to death.

The IG foremen could also impose punishments by means of their daily reports on the work performance of individual prisoners. They had to pass on the value measured as a percentage of a German worker's performance to the camp management in writing; if this value repeatedly fell below 75 percent ¹³² or once below 50 to 60 percent¹³³, a prisoner could initially expect to be caned in the Monowitz camp. In the event of a repeat offense, they were threatened with transfer to a harder camp or transfer to Birkenau. The masters were well aware of the consequences of their actions, which is why some of them always wrote no values below 75 percent on the registration forms ¹³⁴, others sometimes only 20 percent ¹³⁵. In many cases, this was tantamount to a death sentence ¹³⁶.

In order to extract the last reserves of performance from prisoners whose work performance had not improved as a result of the beatings, some IG masters openly threatened to send them to the gas chamber ¹³⁷. This was able to unleash unimaginable powers even in completely emaciated "Muselmänner": In their fear of death, they mobilized their last reserves of physical strength, which usually led to their death in a very short time, either by exhaustion directly at the work site¹³⁸ or during the next selection. Although this procedure was obvious to everyone working on the construction site, the prisoners were not allowed to talk about it. However, if one of them spoke out clearly that a missing worker was deported to Birkenau as a "Muselmann", then the civilian master could also report him to the SS and have him punished¹³⁹.

¹³¹ Nümbg. doc. NI-1 1014, Penalty report against Jewish foreman, 28.2. 1944.

¹³² Nümbg. doc. NI-4829, statement by Tauber, 3.3. 1947, p. 2.

¹³³ Nümbg. doc. NI-4827, Treister statement, 3.3. 1947, p. 1.

¹³⁴ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 105 1, Wagner statement, Sept. 3, 1947, p. 2.

¹³⁵ Nümbg. doc. NI-4829, statement by Tauber, 3.3. 1947, p. 2.

¹³⁶ Nümbg. doc. NI-9807, Wollheim statement, June 3, 1947, p. 8.

¹³⁷ Nümbg. doc. NI-4829, statement Tauber, 3.3. 1947, p. 2. Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 1695, statement Dales, 7/17/1947, p. 2. Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 1694, Davison statement, 19.7. 1947, p. 3. Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 1692, From says Frost, July 16, 1947, p. 2.

¹³⁸ Nümbg. doc. NI-4830, p. 2, Vitek statement, 3.3. 1947.

¹³⁹ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 10 19, punishment report, 5.5. 1944; punishment 15 strokes of the cane.

The attitude of the management

Engineer Murr demanded "in the name of the IG directorate" from the SS camp management more cooperation in the efforts to increase the prisoners' work performance and was of the opinion that "the prisoners could remain at work in 15-degree frost"¹⁴⁰. The consequences of such working conditions – according to witnesses

say at up to minus 30 °C¹⁴¹ – without coats, gloves, hats and others protective equipment need not be explained again here. Came prisoners

The foremen then gathered around a wood fire or a "coke basket" to warm up a little, Chief Engineer Faust showed no understanding for this "lumbering about at work", but all the more for the behavior of the supervisory staff: "Can you blame a foreman or shaft foreman if he strikes once? Despite this, this often very salutary slamming is strictly frowned upon according to the new GBA guidelines and has recently led to a severe reprimand of the

Schulz company. The reprimand came after some Eastern workers and Croats were beaten up on the building site."¹⁴²

Faust also showed great understanding for firm action by the companies commissioned by the IG; after all, they also had to meet their deadlines. The action he mentioned by the labor deployment authorities against civilians who had assaulted prisoners or "foreign workers" was not an isolated case. There are several reports of convictions of guards, administrators and mine personnel, although no sentences are known. Despite the fact that, from 1943 at the latest, the policy of all authorities involved in the deployment of labor, which now also included the WVHA with certain restrictions, was geared more strongly towards economic necessities, this intervention had nothing to do with an intended improvement in working conditions for the prisoners. Rather, it was a matter of disciplinary interests, as civilians took the right to inflict punishments on themselves, which was inappropriate for the prisoners.

lingen "was regarded as a prerogative of the SS"¹⁴³. Despite such intervention by the authorities, IG employees continued to take part in the mistreatment of inmates.

also during the year 1944¹⁴⁴. As a result, the management of IG Auschwitz¹⁴⁵ felt compelled to issue an official ban on such excesses. However, it does not seem to have reached all the responsible authorities.

because "the beatings never stopped", as a Jewish prisoner who had only been transferred to an IG coal mine in the fall of 1944 recalled¹⁴⁶.

The IG employees had evidently already largely adopted the brutal approach of the SS, the Kapos and foremen – and this could no longer be reversed.

¹⁴⁰ Nümbg. doc. NI- 12383, Spetter statement, 13.11. 1947, p. 3.

¹⁴¹ Nümbg. doc. NI- 11 862, statement by Schuster, 13.10. 1947, p. 4 f.

¹⁴² Nümbg. doc. NI- 14532, 80./81. Buna weekly report, 13. 12. 1942.

¹⁴³ Nümbg. doc. NI- 11695, Statement Dates, 17.7. 1947, p. 1.

¹⁴⁴ Nümbg. doc. NI- 12070, statement by Budziaszek, 27. 10. 1947.

¹⁴⁵ Nümbg. doc. NI-98 14, Hausmann statement, 24.6. 1947, p. 2. Nümbg. doc. NI-9810, statement by Reinhold, 19.8. 1947, S. 5.

¹⁴⁶ Nümbg. doc. NJ- 11 879, Ehrlich testimony, 10/15/1947, p. 3.

from their imaginations by a mere instruction. In addition, this brutality, which was sanctioned by the management for a long time and then only sporadically prosecuted, acted as compensation for the pressure to perform to which the employees of IG Auschwitz were subjected. Even an IG foreman had to fulfill his workload and meet deadlines¹⁴⁷. If he did not want to jeopardize his own position, he had to force his subordinates to work as hard as possible, even under adverse conditions.

However, this stressful situation cannot satisfactorily explain all the excesses committed by IG employees. When IG foremen incited Kapos to take off the good shoes of newly arrived prisoners in order to put them on themselves, or forced Kapos to "make the prisoners take off their coats on frosty winter days in order to increase the pace of work"¹⁴⁸, then this was no longer the result of economic constraints. Years of indoctrination with racist ideology and the constant confrontation with its practical implementation in the immediate vicinity of the factory had left their mark. Despite all the problems, however, the factory manager of IG Auschwitz seems to have been very satisfied with his experiences at the Monowitz concentration camp, because, as described above, he used it as a model for the action taken against "labor loafers" among the civilian workers at the education camp¹⁴⁹.

Such behavior is completely at odds with a sober, economically rational view. Prisoners who were punished with 25 strokes of the cane for poor work performance did not work any better afterwards, but spent some time in the infirmary. The overzealousness of inmates caused by fear

The fact that the prisoners were weakened by malnutrition and illness led at best to a further increase in the number of accidents, but not to a better work result¹⁵⁰.

And in the case of monotonous, hardly accident-prone work, the output may have been increased in the short term, but after a few days at the latest, the prisoners collapsed dead at the workplace or were selected. Such economically inappropriate behavior was not due to a lack of insight into the causes of the inmates' poor work performance. Otto Ambros, the board member responsible for IG Auschwitz, for example, was aware of the

were well aware that high productivity could only be achieved with good accommodation, food and working conditions¹⁵¹. Construction meetings also discussed the drop in work performance due to poor nutrition¹⁵².

¹⁴⁷ Nuremberg doc. NI-12070, statement by Budziaszek, 27. 10.1 947.

¹⁴⁸ Nuremberg doc. NI-9807, Wollheim testimony, 3.6. 1 947, p. 3.

¹⁴⁹ Nuremberg Doc. NI- 10166, testimony Lotzmann, 4.9. 1 947, p. 3 ff., former member of the plant security of IG Auschwitz.

¹⁵⁰ Nuremberg Doc. NI-1 1 652, Loebner testimony, June 16, 1947, p. 2 f.

¹⁵¹ Nuremberg doc. NI-11 140, 22nd construction meeting, 21. 1. 1 943, p. 5

¹⁵² Nuremberg doc. NI- 11125, 10th construction meeting, 26.8.1 941, p. 4.

IG Farben's approach was rather based on the fact that concentration camp inmates were not regarded by the factory management as workers in the conventional sense. As a result, they were not regarded as a scarce resource that could be dealt with "economically" in the true sense of the word. While civilian labor, also from abroad, became an increasingly valuable commodity as the war progressed, the value of concentration camp prisoners continued to fall. From 1942/43, this led to an almost grotesque development, whereby inmate workers were worth less in the eyes of the IG managers than they were to the WVHA. The organizers of prisoner deployment at private companies within the WVHA had already recognized the need for careful, economical and resource-conserving handling of prisoners, as they were aware of the situation throughout the Reich.

The management of IG Auschwitz, on the other hand, knew of no shortage of prisoner labor. In contrast to other private companies, the factory benefited from the central role of the Auschwitz concentration and extermination camp within the National Socialist extermination policy. As long as Jews from all parts of Europe were transported to Auschwitz to be murdered, there were always enough able-bodied people to work at the Buna factory. An improvement in the living and working conditions for the prisoners, which would have increased their labor force and thus

The management therefore felt that it was unnecessary to have a trained workforce for the IG, as replacements were permanently available ¹⁵³. The sheer existence of an apparently unlimited labor potential seems to have made rational economic action impossible. Dürrfeld and his colleagues tried to profit from the murder of the prisoners in Auschwitz. Instead of raising their living conditions to a minimum standard, they regarded the prisoners as material that could be replaced at will. Not only did they cheaply accept their murder, but they also contributed to their "extermination through labor" by exerting constant selection pressure. Through its policy of looking the other way, the management of IG Auschwitz made itself an accomplice in the murder of thousands of prisoners.

Thanks to the close contact between the men responsible for IG Auschwitz, Ot to Ambros, Heinrich Bütefisch and Walther Dürrfeld, and many high-ranking SS leaders and RFSS Himmler, they made a significant contribution to developing a method of inmate deployment that reconciled the fundamentally conflicting interests of armaments production and the extermination of the ideological enemy. Such an extensive identification with national socialist ideology cannot be assumed for all employees of the plant. It is true that one could get the impression from reading the testimonies and experience reports that almost all IG employees displayed such an attitude in their dealings with the prisoners. However, this would overlook the fact that the protective behavior of individuals towards the prisoners inevitably had to take place in secret and was therefore rarely reported.

¹⁵³ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 1705, Greenham statement, 23.7.1 947, p. 2.

could. Nevertheless, it would appear that the vast majority of the IG employees in charge of this function adopted an indifferent attitude towards the treatment of concentration camp inmates. Although they were not actively involved in the mistreatment and extermination of Jewish prisoners, they tacitly, if not condonedly, accepted both.

3. IG Auschwitz in the fifth year of the war

More than two years after the start of construction, the situation for IG Auschwitz had changed fundamentally. On the one hand, the first production units were slowly nearing completion on the huge construction site; the construction companies were moving out to make way for the operating personnel, although only a few of them were prisoners. However, the political and strategic conditions had changed even more profoundly. The hoped-for German colonial empire in the East threatened to collapse even before it had been established. After the Wehrmacht's last offensive at the beginning of July 1943, the Red Army took the initiative and began to push back the German troops on a broad front. In view of the material superiority of the Allies, Germany's defeat was only a matter of time.

The continuing setbacks on the eastern front did not remain without effect on the mood in Auschwitz. Hope for the final victory had replaced the initial euphoria among the IG managers. The factory management issued slogans of perseverance, as the changed war situation made it increasingly difficult to continue work at the Buna construction site. In addition to insufficient and delayed deliveries of raw materials, the supply of food and clothing became increasingly problematic. The situation on the labor market had also worsened. The high losses of the Wehrmacht had made further drafts necessary, which drew skilled German workers away from the construction site. IG managers and GBChem employees were therefore constantly on the lookout for untapped labor reservoirs.

Labor deployment of prisoners of war

In the late summer of 1943, a contingent of workers arrived at the construction site that would prove to be just as problematic in the following months as the prisoners from the concentration camp: British prisoners of war. The ambivalent relationship between the regime leadership and the United Kingdom evidently also shaped the attitude of the IG management towards these troops. However, the continuing need for additional workers initially allowed Dürrfeld to overlook the obvious problems of employing prisoners of war in the armaments industry.

The first British arrived in Auschwitz in September 1943¹⁵⁴. The vast majority of them had fallen into the hands of German troops during the fighting in North Africa. Via prisoner of war camps in Italy and the main camp

(Stalag) Lamsdorf (on the grounds of a military training area) near Opole¹⁵⁵, they finally arrived in Eastern Upper Silesia, where the management of the

IG Auschwitz initially placed them in Camp VIII, then from January 1944 in Camp VI under¹⁵⁶. The rather unusual work assignment far from the place of capture is probably due to the persistent efforts of Dürrfeld and Krauch to find new laborers.

labor force. In any case, at the beginning of 1944, in addition to the extensive

In addition to the use of concentration camp prisoners in the chemical industry, he also emphasized the use of prisoners of war as a great success of his "independent recruitment policy"¹⁵⁷. The number of Britons working for IG Auschwitz had risen by the end of 1943 to

about 1,400 to 1,500 men at¹⁵⁸. In January 1944, a considerable number were transferred to two other chemical plants in Upper Silesia, to Heydebreck and Blechhammer. Around 600 British prisoners of war remained in Auschwitz until the evacuation at the beginning of 1945. The use of prisoners of war for armaments work contravened the relevant provisions of the Hague Land Warfare Convention. However, the responsible members of the Board of Management of IG Farbenindustrie were not aware of the content of these agreements under international law until after the war.

End of the war Knowledge¹⁵⁹.

Nevertheless, the factory management took the special status of the British prisoners of war into account – in contrast to the Soviet prisoners of war or the concentration camp inmates – at least to a limited extent. For example, a formal contract between the German Reich and the employing company regulated in detail the "conditions" under which the British were "transferred".

An agreement between the Janina mine administered by the IG and the "Lamsdorf O/S prisoner-of-war camp"¹⁶⁰ has been preserved.

¹⁵⁴ *Through the mediation of IG Auschwitz, the State Labor Office had already assigned 200 British prisoners of war of Jewish faith to the Janina mine in January 1943, who thus worked indirectly for the Buna-Werk. The mine administration's attempts to deal with the "indiscipline" and refusal to work were in vain and led to the exchange for concentration camp prisoners in August 1943. Nümbg. doc. NI- 10508, Upper Silesian Mining Association to Janinagrube, 8.1.1 943. Nümbg. doc. NI- 10512, message from Janina mine to camp administration regarding refusal to work, 6.7. 1 943. Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 0526, note from Janinagrube regarding the withdrawal of prisoners of war, 14.8.1 943.*

¹⁵⁵ *BAB, R 58/272, p. 82, List of prisoner-of-war camps in the Reich territory, August 21, 1941.*

¹⁵⁶ *Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 1693, statement by Ferris, 23. 10. 1947, p. 1 f. Nümbg. doc. NI-11 695, statement Dales. 1 7.7. 1 947, p. 1. The camp in Auschwitz was subordinate to Stalag Lamsdorf in military district VIII B and bore the Wehrmacht designation "E 715". Nümbg. doc. NI-! 1696, Coward statement, October 23, 1947, p. 1.*

¹⁵⁷ *Nümbg. doc. NI-7569, Krauch to Kehr!, 13. 1. 1944.*

¹⁵⁸ *Nümbg. doc. NI-1 1 696, Coward statement, 23. 10.1 947, p. 1. Nümbg. doc. NI-11 701, Pascoe testimony, 22.7. 1 947.*

¹⁵⁹ *Nümbg. doc. NI-6848, Schneider statement, 22.4. 1 947, p. 14.*

¹⁶⁰ *On this and the following: BAB, R 5 8/272, p. 1 f., Treaty between the Reich and the French A.G. Galizische Bergwerksgesellschaft Libiaz, 9. 1. 1 943. On 1. 1. 1943, the HTO transferred the provisional management of the mine to the IG. It is noticeable that the contract had already been signed by the Galizische Berg werksgesellschaft on September 1, 1942. The countersignature by the Lamsdorf camp, on*

the other hand, only took place a week after the takeover by the IG.

The British prisoners of war were granted a six-day week, "good and sufficient" food and accommodation and insurance "against accidents" at the company's expense. In addition, the employer was required to "treat the prisoners of war with humanity" and to "protect them in particular against violence, insults and public curiosity". The remuneration to be paid to the Lamsdort camp amounted to 60 percent of the respective standard wage. The administration deducted a considerable amount from this for food, accommodation and clothing costs; the remaining wages were then paid to the prisoners of war in "camp money" or "credited" to an account ¹⁶¹

In comparison to the prisoners of the concentration camp, the following people lived and worked

The British prisoners of war were actually in much better conditions. They were allowed to keep their uniforms and leather boots in Auschwitz, which was an invaluable advantage under the conditions of camp life. Especially

In terms of food, they were "treated pretty well". Although the prisoners of war said they "could not live" on the rations they were given, which were only slightly higher than those of the concentration camp prisoners ¹⁶²; parcels from their relatives and from the Red Cross ensured them a relatively luxurious lifestyle: Cigarettes, chocolate, coffee beans and even alcohol made the British coveted barter partners, even by Germans. The prisoners of war were therefore much better equipped for the hard work on the construction site than most other workers. They were also more likely than prisoners or Eastern workers to be given protective clothing for dangerous work. Although they were used for work similar to that of the prisoners, deaths in the British commandos or in Camp VI were therefore the exception ¹⁶³.

They also had their own doctors who looked after the sick and injured. However, IG employees told the two doctors from the outset that they "had to limit the sick list to a maximum of three percent". The British were also less concerned with medical aspects than with achieving the "necessary production output", as they called it.

"in clear and unmistakable language"¹⁶⁴. Despite the preferential treatment of prisoners of war, such a low sickness rate was completely unrealistic. At the instigation of the factory management, the IG doctors Pe schel and Bonk nevertheless tried to "enforce" compliance with the specified quota by means of "weekly inspections". In the "follow-up examinations" they scheduled, they therefore simply wrote the corresponding number as "fit for work", "whereupon the majority of the sick were forced to work at gunpoint". Despite the rigorous measures, the union apparently did not succeed in enforcing its demands.

¹⁶¹ BAB, R 2/5359, p. 12 ff., communication RFM concerning the remuneration of prisoners of war, 21.1.1. 1941.

¹⁶² Nuremberg Doc. NI-1 1693, Ferris testimony, October 23, 1947, p. 4.

¹⁶³ Nuremberg doc. NI-11 696, Coward testimony, Oct. 23, 1947, p. 4 f.

¹⁶⁴ On this and the following: Nuremberg doc. NI-1 1700, statement Robertson, July 20, 1947, p. 1 f., and Nuremberg Doc. NI-1 1707, statement Spencer, 19.7. 1947, p. 1 f.

Overall, the Germans' behavior towards the British prisoners of war in Auschwitz was characterized by a strong ambivalence. Officially, very similar rules applied to them as to the other forced laborers at IG Auschwitz: their productivity and sick leave were strictly controlled, their escape from the camp was severely punished¹⁶⁵ and it was forbidden to go to air raid shelters¹⁶⁶. On the other hand, they were hardly subjected to any harassment, neither by the Wehrmacht soldiers responsible for guarding them nor by the IG employees. On the contrary, individual work detachments could allow themselves provocations such as collective refusal to work towards the German supervisory personnel without this having any practical consequences¹⁶⁷.

A former prisoner of war describes the situation succinctly: "The Germans seemed to have an inferiority complex towards us. Although they were undoubtedly our masters, they never felt safe in dealing harshly with us and seemed to be afraid that they wouldn't get away with it." ¹⁶⁸

On the one hand, the restrained approach towards the British was certainly due to the fact that, unlike most other forced laborers, they were not regarded as "sub-human" even by staunch Nazi supporters. Although they were seen as an enemy to be fought, they were accorded a certain equality that did not allow them to be "destroyed" in any way whatsoever. On the other hand, very few Germans were still seriously convinced of the German "final victory" when the British arrived. An overly exposed and brutal approach against the potential victors must therefore have seemed less than opportune to most.

The self-confident manner of the British prisoners of war was also due to their homogeneity and internal organization: the same language, the same reason for imprisonment, shared experiences and the at least partial continuation of military rank made it easier for them to act collectively even in captivity. Under these conditions, the factory management could not enforce just any order, but had to rely on a minimum level of cooperation. The Wehrmacht officers also granted the British at least some of their rights as prisoners of war. They were able to appoint one of their comrades as a "Red Cross representative", who was granted an astonishing degree of freedom of movement ¹⁶⁹. "Under the pretext of buying razor blades and other things" for his comrades, Coward was able, as he later put it, "to get a guard to take him into the town of Auschwitz". As on other occasions, it was possible for him to get

¹⁶⁵ prisoners of war who had escaped and been recaptured lost their former status. They were punished with death or transferred to a concentration camp. In Monowitz, they wore the usual striped prisoner suit with a black corner and the designation "XKGF".

¹⁶⁶ USHMM, reel 70, IG circular 9066/44, 21.8.1 944.

¹⁶⁷ In one case, however, the shooting of a British prisoner of war by a guard for disobeying orders is reported. Nuremberg Doc. NI-1 1696, Coward testimony, October 23, 1947, p. 3.

¹⁶⁸ Nuremberg Doc. NI- 1 1705, Greenham testimony, July 23, 1947, p. 1.

¹⁶⁹ On this and the following: Nuremberg Doc. NI- 1 1696, Coward testimony, Oct. 23, 1947, p. 1 ff.

with residents of the town, SS men and "foreign workers", all of whom proved to be well informed about the events in the camps. Coward even managed to get his accompanying guard to show him the "various places where the gas chambers were located and the places where the cremations took place" in exchange for a few cigarettes. None of the IG members

The gassing of prisoners unfit for work was denied by the prisoners with whom he or other prisoners of war came into contact; it was in fact the "talk of the day" at Coward and his colleagues took every opportunity to gather information to be smuggled out as soon as the chance arose.

Presumably curiosity and adventurousness drove Coward to conduct what was probably a unique and life-threatening experiment: he had learned from a concentration camp inmate that there was a British ship's doctor of Jewish faith in Monowitz whose ship had been torpedoed. It was difficult to make direct contact, as the doctor was not assigned to the Buna commandos and was constantly in the camp. The tried and tested method of bribing him with cigarettes also helped here: Coward used this method to persuade one of the guards to swap his clothes with a concentration camp inmate and let him march into the camp with the other inmates. He actually managed to pass undetected as a prisoner until the start of work the next morning. Although he did not meet the English doctor as initially planned, he was able to report on the living conditions of the prisoners in Monowitz from his own experience¹⁷¹. According to Coward, he passed on his detailed knowledge of the working conditions of the prisoners and prisoners of war to British authorities, together with information of military value.

Such great freedom of movement was unthinkable for Soviet prisoners of war. Although they had the same status under international law as the British, the responsible Reich authorities did not grant them any of their already limited rights. On the contrary, during the first months of the Russian campaign, they were treated worse in Auschwitz than the other prisoners in the concentration camp. Until October 1 941, Soviet prisoners of war only came to the concentration camps to be executed. There were so many transports between Stalag Lamsdorf and KL Auschwitz at this time that a transport passport was issued by the responsible state police office in Opole¹⁷². After the security police "measures" had initially been the main focus, "Soviet Russians were now also sent to the concentration camps for labor purposes"¹⁷³. By being transferred to a concentration camp, they fell outside the jurisdiction of the Wehrmacht and thus completely lost their rights as prisoners of war. In the eyes of the SS, they were not only enemy

¹⁷⁰ Nümbg. doc. NI-1 1 696, Coward statement, 23. 10.1 947, p. 3 f. Nümbg. doc. NI-1 1 698, statement Alexander, 19.7. 1 947, p. 1 f. Nuremberg doc. NI-1 1 701, Pascoe statement, July 22, 1 947, Nuremberg Doc. NI- 1 2390, Aus Hartland, 1 4 1 1 1 947, p. 2, Nuremberg Doc. NI- 12388, Doyle testimony, 1 4 1 1 1 947.

¹⁷¹ Nuremberg doc. NI- 1 1 696, Coward testimony, 23. 10.1 947, p. 1 f.

¹⁷² BAB, R 58/856, p. 90 f., Stapo Oppeln to RSHA, 25.9. 1 941.

¹⁷³ IfZ, MA-553, telex from Heydrich to all Stapo offices, 11. 10.1 941.

The guards treated the broken-up units even worse than the other camp inmates. Already exhausted by the long marches west to the prison camps, many Russians lost their lives within a very short time.

Just a few days after the approval of a work assignment by the Krauch, who was always looking for new sources of labor for his major Silesian projects, suggested to General Thomas that Soviet prisoners of war be used in the armaments industry¹⁷⁴.

at IG Auschwitz did not materialize at first, although the Ministry of Economic Affairs Ministry had achieved a reduction in overly strict state police security measures in the deployment of labor¹⁷⁵. Reports from other IG factories about the The unsatisfactory deployment of the prisoners of war due to their poor state of health apparently led to a certain reluctance on the part of the management in Auschwitz¹⁷⁶ despite the great demand for labor. The construction management of IG Auschwitz therefore first inspected the "POW camp of KL Auschwitz" in Birkenau. While the IG delegation found the camp to be "in order", the Russians still employed there made a "very pitiful impression" on them¹⁷⁷.

In complete contrast to the usual striving for ever larger contingents, in this case the construction management even set conditions under which it would be prepared to employ Soviet prisoners of war on its construction site: This would only be possible if they were housed in KL Auschwitz and transportation to and from the site was guaranteed. In addition, the IG demanded that "only healthy, strong and fully able-bodied prisoners of war" be placed at its disposal. This was a veiled refusal by the company, because under the conditions at KL Auschwitz, no Russian prisoners of war met these requirements in the spring of 1942. Accordingly, only small contingents were deployed in the coal mines affiliated to the IG, but not on the Buna construction site.

site itself. In September 1942, 350 Russian prisoners of war were finally transferred to Günthergrube¹⁷⁸ and 300 to Fürstengrube¹⁷⁹. These were presumably the rest of the approximately 15,000 prisoners who had been sent to Auschwitz since the fall of 1941.

long Russians¹⁸⁰, who now enjoyed a certain respect due to their long survival in the camp. Almost 90 percent had died of exhaustion or been murdered by mid-1942. During their work for IG, the Russian prisoners of war were no longer under acute pressure from the SS. However, their living and working conditions were no better than those of the prisoners from the Monowitz concentration camp.

¹⁷⁴ Nümbg. doc. EC-489, Krauch to Thomas, Oct. 20, 1941.

¹⁷⁵ BAB, R 7/715, RWM decree, October 24, 1941.

¹⁷⁶ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1355 1, Letters from IG-Werke concerning Soviet prisoners of war, 24.1. 1942. Nümbg. Doc. NI- 1 3544, IG-Landsberg to IG headquarters in Berlin, March 13, 1942.

¹⁷⁷ On this and the following: Nümbg. doc. NI-14552, 42nd weekly report, 15.3.1942.

¹⁷⁸ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 0844, Günthergrube to the Katowice office, 18.9. 1942.

¹⁷⁹ Nümbg. doc. NI- 145 13, 68th/69th weekly report, 10.9.1942.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. Piper, Zahl, p. 53, 149 f.

Prisoner deployment in the IG coal mines and subcamps

Prisoners from the concentration camps in Auschwitz did not initially work in the IG coal mines. It was not until the fall of 1943 that the company deployed camp inmates not only on the construction site of the Buna plant, but also in the associated coal mines in eastern Upper Silesia. The first contingent of prisoners arrived on September 5, 1943 at the Janina mine, which had only been under IG control since the beginning of the year. Although there had already been discussions in the management board at the beginning of 1942

IG Farben to acquire the mine, which was very close to the Auschwitz plant, to further secure the supply of raw materials, but negotiations were delayed¹⁸¹. Although the Board of Management had agreed to purchase the mine for a maximum price of RM 10 million at the end of October 1942¹⁸², the purchase could not be completed as the Haupttreuhand Ost (HTO) had not yet clearly clarified the ownership structure. The case was more complicated because the Janina mine was owned by the "Französische AG Galizische Bergwerksgesellschaft", which meant that it could not simply be expropriated. It was finally agreed that Fürstengrube GmbH - and thus IG Farbenindustrie - would initially take over Janinagrube on a fiduciary basis as of January 1, 1943¹⁸³.

Just a few weeks later, five directors of IG Farben visited the Janina mine¹⁸⁴. At this time, 200 British prisoners of war of Jewish faith were already working there, which the State Labor Office was able to employ as a result of the negotiations. with the Upper Silesian Mining Association a week after the takeover by the IG had assigned¹⁸⁵. However, the mine management was not satisfied with their work over the next few months. The mine foreman repeatedly complained about the lack of discipline on the part of the British, who were hardly intimidated by the supervisory staff.¹

⁸⁶. While the management of the Janina mine had therefore already considered withdrawing it at the end of July at the first meeting of the labor deployment authorities¹⁸⁷

the now responsible administration of the Fürstengrube for a renewed allocation of prisoners of war¹⁸⁸.

¹⁸¹ Nuremberg doc. NI-12014, memorandum, 2.2.42.

¹⁸² Nuremberg doc. NI-8266, Report on the 35th board meeting of IG Farben, 29. 10.42.

¹⁸³ Nuremberg doc. NI-8265, Report on the 36th Board Meeting of IG Farben, 17. 1. 2.42.

¹⁸⁴ Nuremberg doc. NI-14538, 86th/87th weekly report, 24.1.43; the visitors were Otto Ambras, Heinrich Bütefisch, Christian Schneider, v. Staden and Sauer.

¹⁸⁵ Nuremberg doc. NI-10508, letter, 8. 1. 43. Nuremberg doc. NI-10509, sample contract with Stalag Lamsdorf, 9. 1. 43, in which work regulations, pay and treatment were laid down. It is not clear from the documents whether this contingent was put together on the basis of the prisoners' denomination. In any case, the behavior of these first Britons in the service of IG in eastern Upper Silesia does not seem to have differed from that of the prisoners of war at IG Auschwitz, who were very self-confident from September 1 943 onwards.

¹⁸⁶ Nuremberg doc. NI-10519, Report of the mine foreman of the Janina mine, 16.7.43.

¹⁸⁷ Nuremberg doc. NI- 1 0522, Janinagrube to Düllberg, 28.7.43.

¹⁸⁸ Nuremberg doc. NI- 1 0524, Fürstengrube to POW camp Libiaz, 29.7.43.

The Sosnowitz Rifle Battalion, which was responsible for this, resisted all. The labor office Krenau therefore prepared to withdraw the prisoners of war from the camp Janinagrube¹⁸⁹. While further complaints about the British contingent were received and the plant manager threatened to cut wages and reduce rations¹⁹⁰, the Krenau employment office prepared to withdraw the prisoners of war¹⁹¹. Two weeks later, on September 5, 1943, they were finally replaced by concentration camp prisoners, with whom the supervisory staff had "much better opportunities" to force the desired work performance", as one prisoner later recalled¹⁹². From this it can be concluded that the mine management evidently regarded the British and Jewish faith primarily as prisoners of war. Here, too, the pronounced ambivalence towards the United Kingdom was evident, as no such consideration was shown towards Jews from other Western European countries. The newly established Janinagrube subcamp thus became a forerunner for the other IG pits, which also received prisoners just a few weeks later.

The Fürstengrube had already attracted the attention of the IG managers responsible for Auschwitz considerably earlier. On February 8, 1941, IG Farbenindustrie had concluded an agreement with Pleß'schen Bergwerks AG on the founding of Fürstengrube GmbH¹⁹³. In fact, the financially weak Pleß mines became the property of the chemical giant through the mediation of HTO¹⁹⁴, as IG held 51 percent of the shares¹⁹⁵. The new company, which was to secure the coal requirements of IG Auschwitz, which was to be built, started work just two days after IG's decision in favor of the Auschwitz site. This rapid succession of two important decisions for industrial development in eastern Upper Silesia appears to require explanation.

A decision to take over Pleß, prompted by the decision in favor of Auschwitz, could hardly have been made in such a short space of time, despite the speedy approach of the IG managers. It can therefore be assumed that the IG board only took the agreement with Krauch for the Auschwitz site as an opportunity to secure its pre-existing production interests in Oberschlesien. The attention of the company and the Reich authorities had already been focused on the economic development opportunities in this region since the end of the 1930s. By July 1940, construction work for a Buna plant was already underway in Rattwitz, and the renewed decision to build Buna Plant IV in Upper Silesia had already been made in October 1940. In February 1941, the IG managers were therefore presumably able to draw on considerable preparatory work by the economic department of the large corporation.

¹⁸⁹ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 0525, Landeschützenbataillon Sosnowitz to Janinagrube, 11.8.43.

¹⁹⁰ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 0529, letter of complaint Janinagrube, 18.8.43.

¹⁹¹ Nümbg. doc. NI- 10526, communication from the Krenau employment office, 14.8.43.

¹⁹² Nümbg. doc. NI-7966, Orlik statement, 18.6. 1947, p. 1 f.

¹⁹³ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 201 1, contract between IG and Pleß, 8.2. 1941.

¹⁹⁴ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 1786, Düllberg statement, Sept. 29, 1947, p. 2.

¹⁹⁵ Nümbg. doc. NI-1 2015. audit of the Fürstengrube, 28.9.44.

to grasp. Only in this way can the "Supplementary Report on the Coal Seam of the Fürsten Grube", which was based on drillings on February 6 and 7, 1941 and supplemented the first report of July 2, 1940¹⁹⁶, be meaningfully placed in the course of events. The conclusion drawn in the Staff Evidence Analysis of the American investigating authorities for the Nuremberg Trials that "the initiative to find the , Interessengemeinschaft ' IGF-Pless [...] as a power-basis for the planned Buna-plant IGF Auschwitz came from IGF in July 1940 [...] under the influence of [...] the Haupttreuhandstelle Ost" ^{19 7}, is therefore very unlikely. At this time, construction work in Rattwitz had just been stopped, and the wartime decision-makers were still a quarter of a year away from their provisional decision in favor of the Upper Silesia site.

In the spring of 1941, there was only an outdated shaft in operation, which in no way met the needs of IG Auschwitz. The new financiers therefore pushed for construction of new shafts in the Fürstengrube and Günthergrube to begin soon¹⁹⁸. The old management was responsible for the extensive mining-related preparations and day-to-day administrative tasks. The overall management and direction of the company, on the other hand, was the sole responsibility of the representatives of IG Auschwitz. While the IG board member Heinrich Bütelfisch signed the contract had completed the contract himself, Walther Dürrfeld, Karl Braus or Max Faust usually took part in the construction meetings of Fürsten grube GmbH in the following years¹⁹⁹.

By October 1943, both the "Fürstengrube new facility" as in the old mineshafts on prisoners. The "Pleß and Altberun employment offices" initially covered the demand for labor from the workforce of the Fürstengrube taken over from Pleß and by assigning "free" workers²⁰⁰. Behind this term used by the former employees of the mine

However, in addition to German and Polish workers, so-called "Schmeltjuden"^{2 01} and Russian prisoners of war were soon hiding in the "free" labor. In September 1942, both groups of people took up their work in the new Fürstengrube plant with a strength of 300 men each^{2°2}. Only when the demand could no longer be met in this way were prisoners sent to the construction site of the new plant

- This was arranged by IG Auschwitz, which was keen to see the camp completed as soon as possible. As a result, a camp was built to house a maximum of 1,200 prisoners, which, according to former civilian employees of Fürstengrube "not the extermination, but the preservation of every prisoner employed there

¹⁹⁶ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 2012, Supplementary report, 24.2.41.

¹⁹⁷ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 2010, statement by Günther Falkenhahn, Director of Pleß' schen Bergwerks AG, p. I; the statement is preceded by an SEA from which the quote was taken.

¹⁹⁸ Nümbg. doc. NI-1 1 786, Düllberg statement, 29.9. 1 947, p. 3 f.

¹⁹⁹ Nümbg. doc. NI-1 1 786, Düllberg statement, Sept. 29, 1947, p. 6.

²⁰⁰ Nümbg. doc. NI-1 1786, statement by Kotsch, Head of Materials Management and the Operations Secretariat of the Fürstengrube Neuanlage, 18.7. 1 947, p. 15.

²⁰¹ Cf. chapter III, note 145.

²⁰² Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 5255, 68/69th weekly report of IG Auschwitz, 10.9.42.

served"²⁰³. It is possible that the working conditions were actually better than in other mines. It should be noted, however, that the camp inmates were employed here for construction work and not for coal extraction; in other secondary occupations, too, such work generally meant better chances of survival than in the mines.

Around 800 people worked underground in the shafts of the old plant, In addition to local Poles, prisoners of war were also used. It was only in the course of 1944 that up to 300 prisoners were deployed here as well²⁰⁴. However, their working conditions hardly differed from the unbearable conditions reported for the Janina pit. In the Fürstengrube, too, the prisoners had to work in knee-deep water with inadequate equipment, constantly being pushed along. and beatings by the supervisory staff. Civilian workers also took part in the mistreatment here²⁰⁵. The working and living conditions in the mines were therefore also significantly worse in the shafts of the Fürstengrube than in the Monowitz camp. Together with the escalating supply situation in the last year of the war, this resulted in a further reduction in life expectancy of just a few weeks²⁰⁶.

Despite the additional and ruthless use of prisoners, the IG management's scheduling quickly proved to be too optimistic. As early as the end of 1943, the date for the commissioning of the new shafts had to be postponed to mid-1945²⁰⁷. Although the work output, particularly in the Janina pit, was comparatively very high due to the uninterrupted surveillance possible there, the management of IG Auschwitz was by no means satisfied. Walther Dürrfeld apparently repeatedly lobbied the WVHA to reduce the inmates' pay from six RM for skilled workers and four RM for unskilled workers to four and three Reichsmarks respectively. Retroactively to the mo

In mid-April 1944, Maurer finally agreed to this procedure, which was a good quarter more favorable for the company²⁰⁸.

The IG coal mines were not the only subcamps established around the Auschwitz concentration camp. In addition to the "Buna camp"²⁰⁹, to which all other subcamps were assigned from the end of 1943, two more were set up in 1942, namely in Jawischowitz and Chelmek²¹⁰. In the following year, five more were added, including the above-mentioned pits²¹¹. Finally, in 1944

²⁰³ Nümbg. doc. NI- 11 786, statement by Kotsch, Head of Materials Management and the Operations Secretariat of Fürstengrube Neuanlage, 18.7. 1947, p. 15.

²⁰⁴ Nümbg. doc. NI-1 1 786, Böke statement. Manager of the Fürstengrube Altanlage, 22.6. 1947, p. 24.

²⁰⁵ Nümbg. doc. NI- 11 879, statement by Ehrlich, October 15, 1947, who came to Fürstengrube at the end of October 1944.

²⁰⁶ Cf. chapter IV.4.

²⁰⁷ Nümbg. doc. NI- 15097, 1 32nd /1 33rd weekly report, 11. 12.43.

²⁰⁸ Nümbg. doc. NI- 10849, Maurer to Dürrfeld, 19.4.44.

²⁰⁹ Krakowski, Camps, p. 52, erroneously dates the start of construction of the camp in Monowitz "near the end of 1941", whereas the decision to build it was not made until the summer of 1942; cf. also Chapter IV.1.

²¹⁰ Piper, Arbeitseinsatz, p. 233, also dates the opening of the satellite camp in Golleschau to the year 1942.

²¹¹ Cf. Piper, System, p. 43; also Piper, Arbeitseinsatz, p. 233.

the subcamp system of KL Auschwitz underwent its greatest expansion when it comprised up to fifty camps of different sizes²¹².

A significant number of these new camps emerged from the former forced labor camps. The "Organization for Jews" (ZAL), which had spread throughout Silesia since 1940 under the supervision of SS-Oberführer Albrecht Schmelt ²¹³. At the height of its power, the "Schmelt Organization" had more than 50,000 Jews working for it. After more and more Jews were taken from there to the gas chambers of the extermination camps as part of the "Final Solution", these accommodation capacities became available. While the majority of these barrack camps were taken over by KL Gross-Rosen, 15 of the outposts of KL Auschwitz were of such origin. These included the Lagischa, Gleiwitz, Blechhammer and Fürstengrube subcamps. The majority of them were located within the Upper Silesian industrial area, close to the factories that employed them. However, some were also established somewhat further afield in what is now the Czech Republic, for example in Brno, Bruntal and Freudenthal.

Almost all large companies in the German Reich employed concentration camp prisoners between 1943 and the end of the war. Among the beneficiaries of the (supposedly) cheap prisoner labor from the camp complex belonging to KL Auschwitz were, in addition to IG, Oberschlesische Hydrierwerke, Siemens-Schuckert, Hermann Göring Werke, Holzmann, Rheinmetall Borsig and many others. Krupp AG established itself directly next to the Auschwitz main camp in order to be close to the source of the desired workforce. The prisoners were the decisive factor in the selection of the site for the fuse factory ²¹⁴. However, the planned construction of a gun factory at the same location was not carried out²¹⁵.

The organizational structure of the various subcamps largely corresponded to the example of the Monowitz camp, to which they were also organizationally subordinate from November 1943 onwards, was followed - albeit on a smaller scale. An SS unit was responsible for security, with one guard for every 20 to 30 prisoners as a rule²¹⁶. In some production plants, where particularly fine motor skills were required, there were also women-only camps with female guards.

In January 1945, there were more prisoners in the camps belonging to the Monowitz concentration camp than in the Auschwitz main camp and Birkenau together²¹⁷. Of these, the slightly over 10,000 in the actual

²¹² On this and the following Krakowski, *Camps*, p. 50 ff. An exact list of all subcamps cannot be found in the research literature. According to Piper, *Arbeitseinsatz*, p. 233, 18 new subcamps were added to the existing nine in 1944; cf. also Table 6 in the appendix.

²¹³ On this and the following: Piper, *Arbeitseinsatz*, p. 233 ff.

²¹⁴ Nümbg. doc. NI-4723, Krupp memo on a meeting with the SS, April 22, 1943.

²¹⁵ Nümbg. doc. NI-1 1281, Reiff statement, 11.7.1947, p. I.

²¹⁶ APMO, D-Au 111, t. I, korespondencja IG Farben, Abteilung III KL Auschwitz to SS-Standortverwaltung, 13.8.1943.

²¹⁷ According to the camp statistics, the Auschwitz and Birkenau camps had 31,894 prisoners on January 17, 1945, and the Monowitz concentration camp had 35,118 prisoners; see Czech, *Kalendarium*, p. 966 ff.

KL Monowitz, around a third of the inmates were Jewish²¹⁸. In the subcamps, too, the proportion of Jewish inmates was probably more than 80 percent without exception, usually over 90 percent²¹⁹. For the most part, they had to work in the chemical industry, in coal mines or in the metalworking armaments industry. The working conditions were different in each factory and, as in the case of IG Auschwitz, were probably largely determined by the respective occupation in production, construction work or in coal mines. According to the available reports, however, the living and working conditions of the prisoners rarely differed positively from those at IG Farben. In this respect, too, the chemical company probably acted as a role model for other companies.

The development of the factory and the town 1 943/44

The expansion of the largest chemical armaments project continued in 1943. By December of that year, the total number of workers on the IG Auschwitz site had risen to 29,000. Around 5,000 of these were KL inmates, although the construction management endeavored to increase their number to 7,200²²⁰. In the meantime, their field of work had widened after the assembly of the first production facilities had begun. While the factory management had used the prisoners of the "Buna Kommando" almost exclusively for construction work in the broader sense in the first two years, it now also offered selected prisoners the chance to do skilled work. This was generally associated with considerably better working conditions, as the prisoners were usually able to work under roofs or in closed rooms. In addition, precise and reliable work was essential here, which is why the IG supervisors had no interest in harassing or even mistreating the prisoners working there.

In addition, the management was now able to make greater use of the prisoners' qualifications than at the beginning. The IG managers responsible for labor deployment were now even able to personally select "the most suitable workers". To this end, the WVHA had allowed them to enter "the interior of the Monowitz camp" accompanied by an SS leader, as a senior SS leader later testified²²¹. This inevitably gave them an "insight into the conditions that prevailed in the concentration camp in question". Even if the inmates selected in this way were in a

²¹⁸ According to contemporary records, there were 10,223 prisoners in Monowitz on January 1, 1945. The following numbers of prisoners were held in the subcamps administered from there: Golleschau 1,008, Jawischowitz 1,988, Eintrachthütte 1,297, Neu-Dachs (Jaworzno) 3,664, Blechhammer 3,958, Fürstengrube 1 283, Gute Hoffnung (Janina) 853, Güntergrube 586, Brünn (36), Gleiwitz I 1 336, Gleiwitz II 740, Gleiwitz III 609, Gleiwitz IV 444, Laurahütte 937, Sosnowitz 863, Bobrek 213, Trzebinia 64 1, Althammer 486, Tschelowitz-Dzieditz 56 1, Charlottengrube 833, Hindenburg 70, Bismarckhütte I 92, Hubertushütte 202 The total number of male prisoners was 33,023, the total number of female prisoners 2,095; all figures according to Czech, Kalendarium, p. 967 f.

²¹⁹ Cf. Krakowski, Camps, p. 54.

²²⁰ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 1 144, 26th construction meeting, 10.12.1 943, p. 5 ff.

²²¹ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1065, Sommer statement, 4. 10. 1946, p. 9. Karl Sommer was the person responsible for the deployment of prisoners in Maurer's WVHA-D 2 department.

Although the skilled workers fared better than their comrades, their working conditions cannot be compared with those in production plants that were already in operation. As a rule, skilled labor in "Buna" still meant lugging heavy sacks and carrying large assembly parts. The work process and the pace of work were still mainly determined by the Kapos and not by the rhythm of the production facilities.

The first assembly work had already begun in July 1942, after the shells for the fuel synthesis had been partially completed²²². Here, the IG engineers demonstrated the parallel advancement of construction and assembly work; when the latter began, only 13 percent of the building construction volume had been erected. It was not until mid-1943, however, that significant contingents of workers were deployed in the assembly of the production facilities, including prisoners. Nevertheless, in the fall of that year, even in the more advanced synthesis section of the plant, only around a quarter of the unskilled workers were employed in assembly²²³. The first production lines for individual substances were probably up and running by mid-August 1943²²⁴, but the deadlines for fuel synthesis were delayed further and further. In December 1943, the construction management was still targeting the following February for the first "start-up stage", but this date was postponed in January 1944 to April, then again at the beginning of May to July 1944 and finally in June to October 1944²²⁵.

In contrast, the production of methanol for Wehrmacht requirements, which was insignificant compared to the overall plant, began in mid-October 1943²²⁶. The bottling of this first product from the large chemical plant in Auschwitz was celebrated by the plant management with a ceremonial act. All the authorities were present,

"who were usually invited in such cases", above all the district president of Katowice, Springorum²²⁷. Camp commandant Höß also took part in this event, probably one of his last official appearances before Liebehenschel took over from him the following month. Until April 1944, the total number of people employed at the construction site remained roughly constant at just under 30,000. Monowitz had been further expanded in the meantime and from March onwards it continuously housed over 7,000 people. However, the number of prisoners actually working at IG Auschwitz rarely exceeded 5,000²²⁸.

In mid-April 1944, the plant received a high-ranking visit from the directors of the other IG plants, who thus attended a meeting of the Technical Commission of IG

²²² BAB, R 8128/A 1992, p. 114 f., Monthly construction reports of IG Auschwitz, 5.8. 1942.

²²³ BAB, R 8128/A 1992, p. 92 f., Monthly construction reports of IG Auschwitz, 1st IO. 1943.

²²⁴ One of the first facilities was the Schwelteeer processing plant, which was to be fully operational by October 15, 1943. BAB, R 8128/A 1992, p. 95 f., Monthly construction reports of IG Auschwitz, 2.9. 1943.

²²⁵ BAB, R 81 28/A 1992, Monthly construction reports of IG Auschwitz, 1943 and 1944, passim.

²²⁶ BAB, R 81 28/A 1992, p. 24 f., Monthly construction reports of IG Auschwitz, 4.8. 1944.

²²⁷ Nümbg. doc. NI- 14723, statement Braus. 19.8. 1947, S. 2.

came together at the new location. This was probably also intended to mark the increasing transition from the construction phase to the production phase²²⁹. In addition to the usual meetings, tours took up a large part of the three-day visit. The program included inspections of the for sten pit and the plants in Heydebreck and Blechhammer, which were each supplemented by presentations. However, the main focus of interest was the combination plant in Auschwitz itself. Apart from the technical issues relevant to the "Teko", there were also presentations on more general topics. Faust spoke about

Dürrfeld informed his colleagues in detail about his "experience in training, retraining and measures to improve order and performance". These remarks were supplemented by the

"Screening of color films about the construction of the Auschwitz plant"²³⁰. Its authorized signatory, Heinz Savelsberg, guided the IG directors through one of the barrack camps

and proudly presented the modern canteen, butchery and air-raid shelter facilities.

The group of senior IG managers also visited the town of Auschwitz, in particular the new buildings of the town hall and the theater. These were the first signs of the transformation of the supposedly ugly eastern town into a German one

"model settlement", whose vision the mayor illustrated in a report on the further development plans²³¹. The IG played a major role in this development process: In the south-east of the city, it had already been building the standby settlement for IG employees since 1941. It also supported the modernization of the city's infrastructure, for example the already completed conversion of the Salesian monastery into a hospital. Due to the immense economic power of the plant, the IG also exerted its influence on general design issues.

Shortly after the start of IG's involvement in Eastern Upper Silesia, it was agreed with the relevant authorities that Auschwitz would become a town with a population of around 30,000 to 35,000; this figure was later to increase. It was agreed with the regional planners that industry should be the "main driver of urban development"²³². The government in Katowice attached great importance to a strict separation of the German and Polish populations, which the IG agreed to in principle. Representatives of the authorities and industry had also already agreed on the main features of the monastery conversion in June 1941²³³. However, until the planning work was completed, the monastery was initially to be used as a temporary kitchen to cater for the first contingents of workers²³⁴. In a meeting with the district president, the factory management had

²²⁹ In any case, Otto Ambros dissolved the "construction meeting" just a few days later, which had held 26 construction meetings by December 1943. Nümbg. doc. NI-1082 1, Ambros to the members of the construction meeting, 22.4.1944.

²³⁰ There is no reliable information about the whereabouts of this film.

²³¹ Cf. on this and the following: Steinbacher, "Musterstadt" Auschwitz, Chapter V.2.,3.

²³² BAB, R 8128/A 1984, IG file note, June 5, 1941.

²³³ Nümbg. doc. NI-11 121, 6th construction meeting, 18.6.1941, p. 8.

²³⁴ BAB, R 81 28/A 1984, 8th construction meeting, 15.7.1941.

made it clear that they regarded the "expansion of the town of Auschwitz" as a "basic condition" for the "settlement of inhabitants willing to work and eager to contribute"²³⁵. It was believed that this was the only way to attract enough tradesmen and craftsmen to supply the estimated 8,000 IG families. Together with Springorum, the management therefore wanted to lobby GBBau to withdraw its "objection to the expansion of hotels, schools, hospitals and commercial buildings in the town of Auschwitz without fail". Further efforts by the IG finally secured the support of the Gauleiter²³⁶. Despite the extensive restrictions imposed by the Reich on the civilian sector for the duration of the war, these efforts made it possible to advance the construction of the IG-Siedlung to a comparatively high standard.

In the city center, the Group primarily promoted buildings that were of public interest to the newly arrived German population. For example, the municipal administration had already started work on the town hall in December 1941 and had already awarded the contracts for the pharmacy and hospital²³⁷. For the work there, which began in spring 1942, the IG provided the town with a site manager in order to make progress as quickly as possible²³⁸. However, in the opinion of the IG construction management, the "work of the town of Auschwitz" "leaves a lot to be desired", although it had already paid two million RM in subsidies. In April 1942, a letter of complaint was therefore sent to the President of the Government, in which the management complained about the delays²³⁹. In order to ensure better coordination of the joint projects²⁴⁰, representatives of the concentration camp and the IG agreed regular meetings with the official commissioner of the town of Auschwitz in mid-August. Casino and in our [IG] guesthouse"²⁴¹. The company clearly had a considerable interest in the speedy "Germanization" of the town.

A few weeks earlier, the dignitaries had had reason to rejoice: on July 11, 1942, they were able to inaugurate the first new building in the city, the KdF Hall. On July 11, 1942, they were able to inaugurate the KdF Hall, which from then on hosted cultural and propaganda events²⁴². The company's support was not limited to representative buildings, however, but also extended to infrastructural projects. For example, the IG was apparently also involved in the decision to repair the Bahnhofstraße in Auschwitz - as an equal partner alongside the municipal administration, the concentration camp and the

²³⁵ Nuremberg doc. NI- 11 125, I O. Construction meeting, August 26, 1941, p. 9.

²³⁶ BAB, R 8128/A 1984, Gauleiter of Upper Silesia to Ambros, September 22, 1941.

²³⁷ Nuremberg doc. NI-1 1 130, 14th construction meeting, 16.12.1941, p. 6.

²³⁸ Nuremberg doc. NI- 1 1132, 16th construction meeting, 6.3.1942, p. 10.

²³⁹ Nuremberg doc. NI- ! 1 133, 17th construction meeting, April 8, 1942, p. 7.

²⁴⁰ Nuremberg Doc. NI- 14512, 58th/59th weekly report, July 12, 1942.

²⁴¹ Nümbg. doc. NI-15084, 64th/65th weekly report, Aug. 23, 1942.

²⁴² Nümbg. doc. NI-11 137, 19th construction meeting, June 30, 1942, p. 20.

Reichsbahn²⁴³. In addition, the IG also provided financial support for road construction²⁴⁴. In the conflict between the concentration camp and the city administration over the extension of the KL's area of interest, which had been dragging on since the beginning of 1941, the IG tried to act as a mediator²⁴⁵. Until all questions

finally clarified and the border markings could be set, it was June 1944²⁴⁶.

Despite the intensive involvement in the political decisions and the personnel support for the municipal projects, the renovation of the monastery also took an unexpectedly long time. The hospital set up there was therefore only able to start work in April 1943²⁴⁷. It was headed by the "doctor of the town of Auschwitz", Peschel, who was also the company doctor at IG Auschwitz. From November 1941 until the opening of the hospital, his practice was located in the western part of the factory premises. This personal union ensured that the IG had direct access to all information relating to the health and medical care of its workforce. The application of the "strict standards" demanded by the management, particularly in the examination and treatment of sick foreign workers, was therefore within the direct sphere of influence of the IG. Nevertheless, Peschel and his two assistants²⁴⁸ had a large number of patients. In August 1942 alone, for example, the operational medical ward cared for 2,654 patients²⁴⁹. With a total workforce of around 13,000 men, this means that around 20 percent required medical care in the course of a month. However, the camp lockdown had apparently successfully prevented the "infectious diseases occurring in the district around Auschwitz (malaria, typhus, typhus, dysentery and, more recently, diphtheria)" from spreading to the factory's residential camps.

The extensive involvement in the key political issues of urban development makes it clear that the management of IG Auschwitz in Eastern Upper Silesia was indeed concerned with more than just the construction of a new plant. On the one hand, it wanted to develop the town into an important center of the region, which, in addition to modern housing, would also offer a certain attractiveness to the future workforce of the plant. In her eyes, however, this was also inextricably linked to the elimination of all traces of former Jewish and Polish life in the city. Nothing in the "new German town of Auschwitz" was to be reminiscent of the Polish Oswiecim. The far-reaching plans for the model town of the new German colonization of the East, with party buildings, meeting places

²⁴³ Nuremberg doc. NI- 1 5084, 64th/65th weekly report, 23.8. 1 942.

²⁴⁴ Nuremberg Doc. NI- 1 0945, 141st meeting of the Technical Commission, February 17, 1943.

²⁴⁵ Nuremberg doc. NI- 1 1 132, 16th construction meeting, 6.3. 1942. The documents on the conflict between the concentration camp and the town can be found in BAB, R 2/B 61 82. Cf. Steinbacher "Musterstadt" Auschwitz, Chapter V. 3.

²⁴⁶ USHMM, reel 23, ZBL to city administration, 8.6. 1 944.

²⁴⁷ On this and the following: Nümbg. doc. NI- 14575, Peschel statement, 28.2. 1 948, p. 1 ff.

²⁴⁸ These were to be assigned to Peschel according to Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 1 131, 15th construction meeting, 22. 1 1 942, p. 3. In the files there is a reference to at least one assistant, Bank, in N ü m b g . doc. NI- 1 1 700, statement Robertson, 20.7. 1 947, p. 1.

²⁴⁹ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 1 1 38, 20th construction report, 8.9. 1942, p. 28, annex 3.

and sports stadiums had already been completed. Despite all the difficulties in setting up the large chemical plant, the IG tried to make its contribution to the creation of a "bulwark in the East".

Competition for Buna: Kok-Sagys

As the dispute over the influence of the IG on the city's affairs and the expansion of the construction site approached its climax in the spring of 1944, the company's management suddenly felt compelled to protect its Buna plants against unexpected competition: "vegetable rubber", which thrived in temperate climates, now threatened the IG monopoly on supplying the German Reich with rubber substitutes. Even if this meant no danger for the immediate future for the expensive but, after decades of development, now mature rubber, alarm bells were nevertheless ringing in the offices of the chemical giant. After all, the Management Board had approved the enormous investment costs for the fourth Buna factory precisely on the premise that this would secure the monopoly on Buna production for IG. Any competition, no matter from which side, was therefore bound to provoke resistance from the company's top management. But first a few words on the history and development of plant rubber.

Even before the outbreak of the Second World War, Wehrmacht agencies had been interested in cultivating plants from which a rubber-like substance could be obtained. However, initial research efforts did not lead to any valuable results. After the beginning of the Russian campaign, SS units in Russia and the Ukraine came across such a plant and relevant research facilities. All available documents, seeds and a Russian specialist were brought to Germany²⁵⁰. Apparently unaware of the Wehrmacht research at first, the SS began its own experiments on the plant in 1942. Captured seeds of the Kok-Sagys plant, as the "war-important" crop was called²⁵¹. In the months that followed, the project became increasingly important in SS and government circles. In February 1943, Himmler was finally put in charge of the program by Hitler himself²⁵². To his satisfaction, the RFSS was thus able to add a new title to its long line of titles.

Göring appointed him "Special Envoy for Plant Rubber" at the end of July 1943²⁵³.

At around the same time, all the services and research institutes involved in this topic, as well as the rubber processing industry, joined forces to form "Pflanzenkautschuk-G.m.b.H."²⁵⁴. It was hoped that this would enable them to "act as one unit" in order to better assert their common interests. The first task of the newly established umbrella organization was to represent

²⁵⁰ A report on the discovery of the plant by the "2nd SS Inf. Brigade (mot)" was provided by a member of this unit. BAB, SS-HO 7139, p. 214 ff., Brück report, 7.6.1943.

²⁵¹ BAB, SS-HO 7139, p. 45 f., Pohl to Himmler, March 1, 1942.

²⁵² BAB, SS-HO 7139, p. 81 ff., Himmler to Göring, March 20, 1943.

²⁵³ BAB, SS-HO 7139, p. 107 f., Himmler to HSSPF, 23.7.1943.

²⁵⁴ On this and the following: BAB, SS-HO 7139, p. 160 ff., Pohl to Himmler, 12.2.1943.

The tasks were assigned to the various institutions. The plan targets for 1943 spoke of a cultivation area of 40,000 hectares, for the following year of 100,000 hectares. The planting was to take place in the Warthegau, in the General Government and in the Russian region.

The joint venture envisaged the Rajske plant testing station in the area of interest of KL Auschwitz for the laboratory and field trials. Its director, SS-Sturmbannführer Dr. Caesar²⁵⁵, became the leading figure on the WVHA side. He also took over the organization of a "Workshop of Kok-Sagys Rubber Interested Parties", at which representatives of all agencies involved in the cultivation, breeding, research and technology of rubber production from Kok-Sagys gathered at the Berlin SS Main Office at the end of June 1943. The IG and Reich employees involved in the production of synthetic rubber were also informed of the results. Himmler himself contacted the IG board member Ambros, whom he knew well through IG Auschwitz, in order to obtain further information about a rubber specialist²⁵⁶. In a conversation between Himmler and Krauch's employee Eckell, the two agreed that the small quantities of "Kok-Sagys rubber" that had been produced in 1944 "perhaps 1 000" tons, "do not represent a solution to the rubber problem". Rather, they should be regarded as an "auxiliary material" through which Na could be substituted where "Buna is not quite sufficient at the moment for quality reasons"²⁵⁷. However, Eckell also made Krauch's and the industry's point of view clear in the interview. Their aim was "naturally to "completely eliminate the small quantities of natural rubber still needed today"²⁵⁸. In this context, Krauch also mentioned Himmler's willingness to support another Buna plant with labor from his area of responsibility²⁵⁹. The RFSS then informed him that "if necessary", after consultation with Speer, it could provide workers "as in Auschwitz".

The real interest of industry and the pro-business Reich authorities was thus revealed: the further development of Buna, securing sales volumes and broadening the production base. As in the past, however, there must have been differences of opinion on the last point between the state armaments planners and the IG board, which, in view of the looming defeat, certainly did not want any further Buna production.

²⁵⁵ BAB, SS-HO 7139, p. 28 ff., Caesar report, July 1, 1943. Korvettenkapitän Stahl, an SS staff leader, was appointed Himmler's case officer in matters concerning Kok Sagy; BAB, SS-HO 7139, p. 6 ff., Eckell memo, July 24, 1943.

²⁵⁶ BAB, SS-HO 7139, p. 67 ff., Correspondence Personal Staff of the Reichsführer SS and Ambros, September 1 1943.

²⁵⁷ BAB, SS-HO 7139, p. 6 ff., note by Eckell, July 24, 1943.

²⁵⁸ For special applications that required a particular flexibility of the material, IG was still dependent on the admixture of small quantities of natural rubber in 1944. Cf. also the report on the visit by Messner and Ambros to the cultivation trial areas for Kok-Sagys in Auschwitz in Nümbg. doc. NI-36, Höß statement, 15.5. 1 1946, p. 10 f.

²⁵⁹ The construction of another Buna factory in the Generalgouvernement had already been discussed with Speer at the 43rd meeting of Central Planning in Berlin in early July 1943. Nuremberg doc. NI-5666, 2.7.1943.

factory. They only participated in the efforts in the area of plant chewing because this was supposedly a personal concern of the

"Führer" and they did not want to be disadvantaged by a rejection. Krauch had also stated "unequivocally" that the industry did not want plant rubber and that the Reichsamt was currently only interested in the use of plant rubber.

The reason why the Wehrmacht was concerned with plant rubber was because it wanted it"²⁶⁰ o. However, the IG, but probably also the rubber processing industry, saw the cultivation of Kok-Sagys on a significant scale primarily as a threat to their market opportunities. After considerable costs had been

investments had been made in the development of a process for the synthetic production of rubber, there was little inclination in private industry to develop a new and again immature product. To the chagrin of the state research institutions, the collaboration²⁶¹ was therefore primarily characterized by economic considerations, especially with "Continental Gummi-Werke A.G.", which had "not approached the subject matter without prejudice from the outset"²⁶².

Despite this limited support from the industry, the research work made good progress over the next year. The board of the "Ost Gesellschaft für Pflanzenkautschuk und Guttapercha m.b.H.", which coordinated the cultivation of Kok-Sagys in the eastern territories still occupied by the Wehrmacht, had commissioned Continental-Werke to produce "passenger car tires" from pure Kok-Sagys rubber. These were initially intended as a prestige product for Himmler's car, which was to be the first to roll on the new material²⁶³. In July 1 944, a ready-to-run product was available. However, the company's report on the production of the test tire sounded very negative. The authors described "considerable difficulties" during production, considered the running performance to be only "satisfactory" and noted a "worrying defect pattern" in the endurance test. Overall, they came to the conclusion that "in their current state of development, we do not consider these tires to be sufficient for the Reichsführer's car [...]". In view of the lengthy development of the first Buna tire, the surprisingly rapid completion of a Kok-Sagys tire, the seemed "perfectly suitable for normal driving", the skeptical test report mentioned in passing²⁶⁴.

The emerging production results seem to have alarmed the IG and the Reich Office for Economic Expansion in the spring of 1944. At the end of March, the head of agricultural operations in Auschwitz, Caesar, reported to Pohl in a worried tone about the GBChem's attitude, stating that "this side is pleading for a complete cessation of work with Kok-Sagys"²⁶⁵. The arguments put forward by Krauch's colleague Eckell weighed heavily against the

²⁶⁰ BAB, SS-HO 7139, p. 1 54 f., Vogel to Brandt, May 19, 1943.

²⁶¹ BAB, SS-HO 7139, p. 136 f., Böhme to Vogel, June 21, 1943.

²⁶² BAB, SS-HO 7139, p. 138 ff., report Böhme to Eckell, June 3, 1943.

²⁶³ BAB, SS-HO 7139, p. 52, Continental to Mayr, July 25, 1 944.

²⁶⁴ BAB, SS-HO 7139, p. 53, Continental to Mayr, July 25, 1 944.

²⁶⁵ On this and the following: BAB, SS-HO 71 39, p. 85 f., Caesar to Pohl, March 25, 1944.

In his opinion, the acreage was "urgently needed" for food, among other things, and it would be much more effective for the German armaments effort to use the Kok-Sagys workers in the Buna sector anyway. Eckell apparently also won the support of the General Plenipotentiary for Armaments, Kehrl, with this view. In mid-March 1944, the latter wrote to the Ost-Gesellschaft that "after the experiences of 1943, the annual production of Kok-Sagys was too small to be worthwhile for this purpose"²⁶⁶. Based on the results of the Kok-Sagys cultivation in the Generalgouvernement, Kehrl had the facts on his side. According to the government of the Generalgouvernement, the yields on the 5,000 hectares of "forced cultivation area" were "extraordinarily low". Moreover, this "40,000 tons of potatoes were lost" and a large number of workers were put to useless use²⁶⁷. In view of the deteriorating supply situation for the population, the costly project could hardly be justified.

Himmler, however, in his function as special representative for plant rubber, opposed Kehrl's order "with all means at his disposal"²⁶⁸. Without even responding to the arguments, he referred to the responsibility he had been given by Hitler. He was not prepared to break the "obedience to the Führer" that this entailed "out of any capitalist speculation". In his concluding paragraph, however, Himmler correctly outlined the background to industry's resistance: "From your letter I also see a typically narrow big-capitalist way of thinking, which openly sees in plant rubber undesirable competition for the I.G. Farben invention of Buna. You completely forget, Mr. President, that the construction of the large Buna factory, which is currently under construction, would not have been possible without the same Reichsführer-SS, who was commissioned by the Führer to build plant rubber."

Himmler correctly recognized the importance of the use of prisoners for the construction of IG Auschwitz, despite all the "economic difficulties" encountered there. However, he failed to mention on this occasion that his commitment to IG Auschwitz served less the expansion of Buna than the expansion of his own economic power base. The decision as to whether synthetic rubber or his new field of activity, plant-based rubber, was ultimately of greater importance was left to Himmler to decide through the passage of time.

²⁶⁶ Kehrl's letter is dated March 14, 1944. BAB, SS-HO 71 39, p. 85 f., Caesar to Pohl, March 25, 1944. BAB, SS-HO 71 39, p. 113 f., Himmler to Kehrl, April 5, 1944.

²⁶⁷ BAB, SS-HO 71 39, p. 74 ff., Bühler to Lammers, 29. 10. 1943.

²⁶⁸ On this and the following: BAB, SS-HO 71 39, p. 113 f., Himmler to Kehrl, 5.4. 1944.

of the events. The Wehrmacht's setbacks on the Eastern Front and the next step on the road to the "Final Solution of the Jewish Question" finally ended the war. In the early summer of 1944, the dispute over the most appropriate allocation of labor began²⁶⁹.

4. The final phase from May 1 944

On May 15, 1944, the deportation of Hungarian Jews, which had been planned at least since the so-called Wannsee Conference, began. Until the occupation by German troops barely two months earlier, the living conditions for the country's Jewish population of around 800,000 had remained relatively intact despite restrictive legislation by the government allied with Germany²⁷⁰. Now, however, with at least initial support from the Horthy regime, the organizers of the RSHA were able to begin preparations for the most comprehensive, fastest and most effective deportation operation of the Second World War. Under the pretense of resettlement to or labor deployment in Germany, the SS systematically "concentrated" the Jews of Hungary in a few camps from mid-April with the help of local law enforcement officers. From there, the trains departed for Auschwitz, with up to 100 people crammed into each freight wagon. From May 16, around three to four trains a day, each with 3,000 to 3,500 passengers, arrived at the new ramp in Birkenau, which had just been completed.

By the time the war situation turned against Germany, Horthy was forced to halt the deportation, around 437,000 people had been deported to Auschwitz in this way. The SS had prepared well for their murderous task. To ensure that everything went smoothly, the SS leadership had transferred Höß, the former commandant most familiar with the extermination machinery in Auschwitz, back to his old position. Under his supervision, the SS murdered around 90 percent of the deported Hungarians without registration immediately after their arrival in the gas chambers. The extermination process, organized on an industrial scale, allowed the Nazi henchmen to kill up to 20,000 Jews in a single day. Although the SS Central Construction Office had the construction of the crematoria in Birkenau overhauled in good time ²⁷¹, they soon reached the limits of their capacity as the "final solution" was running at full speed. In order to avoid the outbreak of epidemics, the

²⁶⁹ On the one hand, the conditions for the cultivation of Kok-Sagys changed due to the availability of new workers from the deportations of Hungarian Jews. On the other hand, Himmler apparently planned to found a "Hungarian-German agricultural rubber company", for which workers were available in Hungary. BAB, SS-HO 7139, p. 1 1 7 ff., Brandt to Winkelmann, 28.6.1944. The originally planned farmland in the occupied eastern territories had already been recaptured by the advancing Red Army or was about to be.

²⁷⁰ Cf. Braham, *Hungarian Jews*, p. 456 ff.

²⁷¹ Originally, the Topf & Söhne ovens had not been designed for continuous use. Cracks had already appeared in the ovens during the first gassings in Crematorium IV. Without a sufficient cooling phase, there was a particular risk of the combustion chambers and ca mine being destroyed. The Topf & Sons engineer modified the design to meet the requirements of mass murder in the gas chambers; see Pressac, *Krematorien*, p. 97 ff., 1 15 ff.

SS commandos burned the remaining corpses in earth pits, the glow of which could be seen for many kilometers during these months.

The remaining almost 50,000 Hungarian Jews were deemed fit for work by the SS doctors on the ramp. The camp administration then distributed them to various concentration camps, above all to the subcamps of KL Auschwitz, and set up a labor depot in Birkenau. Due to its "privileged" location, there was a surplus of prisoner labor in Monowitz from this point on. This ended the phase of "relative stability" in Monowitz in May 1944, which had been characterized by persistently high death rates. By the end of July 1944, the number of camp inmates had risen sharply from around 7,000 to 11,350. As only a few blocks that had just been completed were available, there was a further shortage of living space in the camp, which hit the new arrivals the hardest. The supply bottlenecks made it objectively impossible to expand the accommodation options. From then until the evacuation in January 1945, the number of prisoners did not fall below 10,000, although the miserable living conditions and exhausting work cost many lives. The camp administration ensured that the dead and those who had lost their strength were constantly replaced by "depot prisoners"²⁷² from their reserves housed in Birkenau.

The factory management of IG Auschwitz was also urgently dependent on such an increase in the number of available workers. On the one hand, it was under considerable pressure from the armaments planners to meet the pressing deadlines for the commissioning of the synthesis and Buna plant. On the other hand, the changed military situation had made it necessary to redistribute the labor contingents on the factory premises. The expansion of air-raid protection measures, which had been underway since the fall of 1943, suddenly drew a considerable proportion of the workforce from all areas of the plant from around mid-June 1944. By the end of the year, all security systems and structural reinforcements should have been installed²⁷³.

In April 1944, reconnaissance aircraft had already taken detailed photographs of the industrial and sealing facilities around Auschwitz, which probably did not go unnoticed by the factory management. In any case, they expected that Auschwitz would also be "included in the areas endangered by air raids". The transport department then organized storage space for its "followers" in less airborne areas in order to "unload valuable household goods and individual items of furniture"²⁷⁴. However, the increasing danger from Allied bombers was apparently not too much of an issue. In any case, on 22 and 23 July 1944, the company sports association of IG Auschwitz and the Gausportamt KdF organized "the first athletics day of the Upper Silesian company sports associations". "The entire German workforce of the construction site" was invited to the competitions on the IG sports grounds²⁷⁵. They seemed to enjoy the

²⁷² prisoners from the deportations who were not immediately sent on to work, but remained in Auschwitz without registration; see Czech, *Kalendarium*, p. 776.

²⁷³ BAB, R 81 28/A 1 992, Monthly construction reports, from June 1 1944 *passim*.

²⁷⁴ USHMM, reel 70, IG circular no. 1 033, 17.7. 1 944.

²⁷⁵ USHMM, reel 70, announcement company sports community, 14.7.1 944.

The Jews were not bothered by the strangely sweet smell that drifted on the wind from the west of the town. There, a few kilometers away in Birkenau, the SS were competing to increase the number of murdered Jews even further every day.

Air hazard of the factory premises

Only a short time later, the evidence of Allied attacks seems to have intensified. The vacation regulations were therefore tightened in order to ensure the "effectiveness of the plant air raid protection, the alarm company, the plant security and the anti-aircraft guns". In the last days of July 1944, Dürrfeld, who was also in charge of plant air raid protection, ordered that only a maximum of five percent of the German workforce could be granted leave²⁷⁶. Three days later, the same department informed all "followers and company employees" about the necessary behavior in the event of an air raid alarm. In particular, the circular drew attention to a defensive system that was now ready for use and would "fog" the factory and the surrounding area in the event of an attack. The "enemy attacking from the air" was to be "deceived about the location of the factory" in order to reduce the number of hits in the immediate vicinity of the factory. This called into question the previously planned protective measures for the "foreign workers" and prisoners, who had simply been led out of the factory premises. Now the factory air-raid protection management was of the opinion that these groups of workers should remain inside the factory, where supposedly "even provisional cover would provide relative protection"²⁷⁷. This was an elegant way of describing the fact that there were bomb-proof shelters only for the German workers.

The management's preparations were not unfounded. In fact, the airspace over eastern Upper Silesia changed in the spring of 1944. The American air bases, which US troops had been installing in southern Italy since December 1943, were now fully operational. The previously "air-protected" areas in East Central Europe were now also accessible to Allied bombers²⁷⁸. The American reconnaissance services had been gathering information about IG Auschwitz since January 1944 and the possibility of using Allied bombs to destroy the facilities there for the production of synthetic fuel and rubber. By mid-May of that year, the destruction of the German Reich's oil supply had been completed. It had become the main strategic target of the Allied air forces. After attacks on the factories in the Old Reich, the attacks shifted to the highly industrialized Upper Silesia at the end of June.

Eight oil-processing plants were located in a relatively small area in the form of a semicircle with a radius of around 50 kilometers. The focus of the American and British air attacks was the synthesis complex in Blechhammer, which was already in production, but IG Auschwitz was also a target. In the late afternoon of August 20, 1944, 127 "Flying Fortresses" dropped bombs at outstanding

²⁷⁶ USHMM, reel 70, IG circular no. 80 1 1/44, July 28, 1944.

²⁷⁷ USHMM, reel 70, IG circular no. 8010/44, 3 July 1, 1944.

²⁷⁸ Cf. Wyman, *Auschwitz*, p. 569 ff.

weather conditions, they dropped their bomb load on the factory premises near Auschwitz. The anti-aircraft guns installed around the plant and the 19 German fighter planes could do nothing against the overwhelming force; only one American bomber was hit²⁷⁹. More than 300 tons of high-explosive explosives shook the factory buildings and caused considerable destruction in various areas of the plant. The factory management had to postpone the start of production of the fuel syn these was postponed for two months after the attack, until October 1944²⁸⁰. In view of the good attack conditions, the American bombers also managed to score numerous hits on the surrounding railroad lines²⁸¹. Although the construction management worked flat out to restore the vital transit routes, it took until mid-September before the first tracks could be put back into operation²⁸².

The prisoners were not spared either. By order of the IG works management forbade them to use the air raid shelters. Members of plant security and other Germans who were still convinced of the "final victory" Sometimes the guards forced the prisoners out of the bomb-proof shelters²⁸³. The order, signed by Dürrfeld himself, was displayed in all factory halls and at the entrances to the air raid shelters. Prisoners who did not comply were to be shot immediately²⁸⁴. It is not clear how many of them were injured or killed by bombs as a result of this instruction; estimates range from 100 to 225 camp inmates²⁸⁵. Despite these victims, many prisoners saw the fact of the Allied attacks as a positive sign, which gave them some hope that the mass killings in Birkenau and their own suffering would come to an end²⁸⁶. Quite a few of them, however, initially had to risk their lives in the defusing detachments, to which the management assigned prisoners without any training²⁸⁷.

The living conditions for the prisoners in the autumn months of 1944 in the The deteriorating supply situation in the German Reich had an ever greater impact on them. This was particularly evident in their clothing, for which there were hardly any replacements. The situation had become so untenable that the WVHA was constantly issuing new "demands for clothing and footwear".

²⁷⁹ Cf. Wyman, Auschwitz, p. 577 f.

²⁸⁰ BAB, R 81 28/A 1992, p. 26, Monthly construction report, 31 .8.1 944.

²⁸¹ With good visibility, hits on railroad tracks do not seem to have been quite as random as Levy, Bombing, p. 267 ff. recently claimed. With a comparatively small number of bombers, the American air units achieved a high degree of accuracy and destructive power in and around IG Auschwitz. This attack took place about eight weeks after hundreds of thousands of Hungarian Jews had been transported by rail to Auschwitz-Birkenau.

²⁸² BAB, R 8128/A 2003 , p. 26, IG circular, 16.9. 1 944.

²⁸³ Nuremberg doc. NI- 10824, Kohn testimony, May 29, 1947, p. 5.

²⁸⁴ StA Frankfurt a.M., criminal case 4 Ks 2/63, folder 26, statement Eschmann, 15.8. 1 947.

²⁸⁵ Nuremberg Doc. NI- 10820, Pinkus to Nuremberg Court, 29.8. 1 947.

²⁸⁶ Cf. Lengyel, Chimneys, pp. 123, 155 f.

²⁸⁷ Nuremberg doc. NI- 10824, Kohn statement, 29.5. 1 947, p. 6; see also chapter 111.4.

received by the camps²⁸⁸. While it had seemed since 1943 that the **WVHA** had understood the necessity of a certain minimum standard for the prisoners better than the camps for economic reasons, this had now been reversed. In response to the demands from the concentration camps, Pohl replied in the fall of 1944, quite obviously incensed, "that both the commandants and their administrative leaders, as well as the doctors responsible for the state of health within the camps, had no idea of the seriousness of our raw materials situation at the beginning of the 6th year of the war".

He then drew a picture of the desolate supply of materials after the military defeats of 1944 on all fronts. As a result, the supply of the fighting troops and those "affected by the air war" would be severely jeopardized, Pohl continued. He made the consequences for the camps unmistakably clear: "significant new purchases of prisoner clothing in 1945" were "no longer to be expected". On the contrary, the prisoners, who were already living in wretched rags, were expected to hand over some more. From now on, the clothing stores were no longer allowed to hand out the few winter suits made of somewhat sturdier cloth that were barely available in Monowitz anyway. Pohl also declared the thin "Drillich gamituren" to be the standard for the external detachments, although he at least allowed them to wear warming "Leibbinden" and pullovers. The letter expressly forbade the issue of "coats, caps and other warm clothing for all prisoners working inside the camp and in heated rooms". This was an instruction that probably did not reflect the conditions in the Monowitz camp, as the distribution of clothing could hardly be controlled by the camp administration. The actual power of disposal over the clothing lay in the hands of the "prisoner self-administration". The lack of deliveries of blue and white striped prisoners' clothing meant that new prisoners had to - or rather were allowed to - continue to wear their own clothing. To distinguish them from the civilian workers, their clothes were marked with paint on the back.

In order to monitor the implementation of the orders, a delegation from the **WVHA** arrived on November 16, 1944 for an "inspection of the state of the prisoners' clothing and the clothing industry in KL Auschwitz". The result of the three-day investigation sounds astonishing, as the commission did not find anywhere that the clothing did not meet the requirements. The only general observation was that the amount of clothing worn by each individual inmate far exceeded the normal requirements. This applies not only to outside workers, but especially to prisoners working in closed and heated rooms."²⁸⁹ The responsible officials in the **WVHA** were clearly trying to pass the blame for their own shortcomings in supplying the camps onto the prisoners themselves. Even if the conditions in the main camp were somewhat better than in Monowitz, the examples of prisoners with double-worn clothing mentioned in the report appear to be quite

²⁸⁸ On this and the following: BAB, NS 3/442, p. 1 f., WVHA to the concentration camp commanders, 7. 11. 1944.

²⁸⁹ BAB, NS 3/380, p. 3 ff., WVHA report, 27. 11. 1944.

to have been deliberately selected. Preferred prisoners from the camp's workshops or Kapos were probably selected in order to justify the further deterioration of supplies for the mass of prisoners. What clothes were available in the camp

The author of the report was of the opinion that the existing storage capacity was "sufficient for the long term"²⁹⁰. The information provided in a further letter from the WVHA at the beginning of

The efforts to remedy the "deficiencies" demanded on January 1945 are unlikely to have been carried out in Auschwitz²⁹¹.

Prisoner deployment and construction progress in fall 1 944

In the fall of 1944, the construction site of IG Auschwitz reached its greatest extent. Despite the increasingly threatening war situation, the expansion and assembly of the factory facilities continued at full speed. Around 30,000 people were always long shifts to finally get the production of synthetic Buna and fuel up and running²⁹². The internationality of the workforce had increased further in 1943 and 1944, and there was still no question of the "Germanization" of the area around Auschwitz. The proportion of Germans was now less than 20 percent following further conscription into the Wehrmacht.

This made the Auschwitz plant fundamentally different from all other IG plants. Although the proportion of foreign workers and concentration camp prisoners had also increased there over the course of the war, the proportion of Germans was generally slightly more than half. The exceptional position of Auschwitz was certainly due to its exposed location on the eastern border of the Reich and the late start of construction, which had already begun during the war. The fuel factory in nearby Heydebreck, which was already in operation, also had a very high proportion of "foreign workers" compared to the factories in the old Reich. Prisoners were only used there during the construction phase, which is why they are no longer listed in the table from fall 1944. On the other hand, the management of IG Auschwitz may have been particularly successful in recruiting non-German workers. Of the 17,828 workers employed directly by IG

of the workforce, 53 percent were "foreign workers" and a good two percent were prisoners of war²⁹³. At 26.6 percent, the proportion of concentration camp prisoners was more than three times the figure at Hoechst, which had the second-highest percentage of concentration camp prisoners.

detected. In total, 81.7 percent of the workforce at IG Auschwitz was of non-German nationality²⁹⁴. Without the use of foreign and forced laborers on a large scale, the Auschwitz plant could not have been built.

²⁹⁰ BAB, NS 3/380, p. 5, WVHA report, 27.1 1. 1944.

²⁹¹ BAB, NS 3/380, p. 2, letter WVHA, 8. 1. 1 945.

²⁹² Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 1412, table from 1 1 0. 1944; cf. also Table 4 in the appendix.

²⁹³ The remaining 12,000 or so people working on the Buna site were employed by the companies that completed individual construction sections on behalf of IG Auschwitz. However, IG Auschwitz was responsible for housing and feeding them, which is why no distinction is constantly made between these different employment relationships in the account.

²⁹⁴ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 14 12, table from 1.J. 0. 1944.

In contrast to Heydebreck, the management in Auschwitz probably did not plan to dispense with prisoners altogether once the assembly work was completed.

In any case, the content of a conversation between Bütetisch, the IG board member responsible for the synthesis section, and Krauch only allows the conclusion that prisoners were also to be used in the production phase²⁹⁵. The development of the use of prisoners in Auschwitz seems to support this. While the number of civilian workers began to fall as early as the beginning of 1944, the number of inmate workers continued to rise in relative and absolute terms during this phase. More and more of them were employed in the assembly of plant components, in production or in the IG offices. The increase in the prisoner workforce in the second half of 1944 was apparently not offset by increased labor productivity. On the contrary, all measures to make their deployment more economical had been in vain. In addition to the fundamental incompatibility of forced prisoner labor and the profit motive of a modern private company, which depended on qualified and motivated workers, there were two additional factors in this phase.

Since May, the proportion of Hungarian Jews in the labor detachments had risen steadily. Although only the strongest of the constantly arriving deportation transports were selected for work, their performance was already significantly improved.

In addition to the chronic shortage of food and shelter, the new arrivals were shocked to have just lost their loved ones. The psychological impact must have been considerably greater than with previous transports, as the extermination machinery in Auschwitz was now working with unimaginable speed and efficiency. In a situation in which more than 10,000 Hungarians a day were murdered in the gas chambers of Birkenau, their lives counted for nothing in Monowitz. Within a very short time, the Hungarian inmate laborers deployed in the worst commandos lost their vitality. After a few weeks, often even before their induction, which was hampered by language problems, had been completed, the living and working conditions had turned them into "Muselmänner", who were replaced by able-bodied compatriots. The permanent change of construction personnel made continuous work illusory.

In addition, the supply bottlenecks in the "war-critical" Auschwitz armaments plant became more and more acute the further the German troops retreated. The IG's commercial enterprises were now no longer even able to fully distribute the meagre prisoner rations. After an air raid, the camp kitchen in Monowitz was also out of action for more than a week as the district heating supply was interrupted. Apart from their bread ration, the prisoners received no food during this time, not even "Buna soup"²⁹⁶.

²⁹⁵ Nümbg. doc. NI-2972, Krauch statement, January 22, 1947, p. 3. According to this document, Bütetisch informed Krauch in 1943 "that the use of concentration camp prisoners was planned as part of the workforce of Buna, Auschwitz". Since both of them had already sought the allocation of prisoner labor for the construction of the plant in the spring of 1941, Bütetisch could only have been referring to the workforce for the production phase two years later; it cannot reasonably be assumed that he informed Krauch about the first-time use of prisoners.

²⁹⁶ Nümbg. doc. NI-11 046, Dürrfeld statement, February 24, 1947, p. 17.

The only compensation was the one-time distribution of an additional quarter ration of bread. This further shortage of food hit the newly arrived and still inexperienced Hungarian Jews the hardest; their productivity decreased from day to day. Together with the continuing fundamental problems with the use of prisoners, work productivity fell to a level that was basically unacceptable for the IG.

IG Auschwitz was certainly not an isolated case in this respect. At their meeting in December 1 944, the labor deployment engineers of the Upper Silesian chemical industry agreed that the work performance of the prisoners was on average only around 40 percent of that of a civilian worker²⁹⁷. This was only about half of what the factory management had estimated when setting the rates of pay three and a half years previously. If the information provided by the labor experts were correct, it would be questionable whether the use of prisoners was profitable at all. A precise review of the economic framework data for the deployment of prisoners is therefore essential.

Considerations on the profitability of prisoner labor

IG had to pay a lump sum to the administration of KL Auschwitz for the prisoners deployed on its construction site, more or less as rent for the right to use the prisoners' labor. In March 1941, when IG was the first company to start using prisoners as laborers on a large scale, a daily rate of three RM for so-called unskilled workers and four RM for so

skilled workers. The representatives of the IG and SS had based this on an average performance of the inmate workers that corresponded to 75 percent of that of a German worker²⁹⁸. By the beginning of 1 944 at the latest, this rate had risen to four and six RM respectively²⁹⁹. Even in the first year of cooperation between the IG and SS, Otto Ambros doubted whether the use of prisoners at these costs was worthwhile at all³⁰⁰. In fact, the collectively agreed wages for German workers in Upper Silesia were comparatively low³⁰¹. With an average working week of 50 1/2 hours³⁰², skilled German workers in the chemical industry in eastern Upper Silesia earned a good RM 37 (gross), while skilled workers earned just under RM 32; in the construction industry, slightly more than RM 38 and RM 31 respectively were paid in the Katto witz area, and in the Pleß region even less.

²⁹⁷ Nuremberg Doc. NI-111 45, Report on the meeting of the labor deployment engineers of the Upper Silesian Chemical Enterprises, 11.12.1944. APMO, Dpr. Mau/12, p. 33 ff.

²⁹⁸ Nuremberg Doc. NI-15148, meeting report IG Auschwitz, March 27, 1941, p. 2.

²⁹⁹ This rate applied to private armaments companies from mid-1943, with the exception of prisoners of KL Auschwitz, who continued to cost only four or three RM. BAB, NS 3/176, p. 128 ff. This financial advantage for IG Auschwitz must have ended by the beginning of 1944 at the latest, because in April, IG manager Walther Dürrfeld complained to the head of Department D of the WVHA, Maurer, about the excessively high rates; he obtained a reduction to the old daily rates for the prisoners working in pits. Nuremberg doc. NI-10849, Maurer to Dürrfeld, 19.4.1944.

³⁰⁰ Nuremberg Doc. NI-4182, Bütelfisch testimony, Feb. 19, 1947, p. 2.

³⁰¹ See Siegel, Performance, p. 128.

³⁰² See Siegel, Performance, p. 301.

what less, namely just over 32 RM and 28 RM. For the construction industry in Auschwitz, therefore, an average value of around 35 and 30 RM accept³⁰³. A miner received about RM 6 per shift (1940)³⁰⁴, which corresponds to a weekly wage of RM 36³⁰⁵.

In comparison with the above-mentioned prisoner rates of 24 and 18 RM per week, from 1944 36 and 24 RM respectively, the wages for German workers were thus higher by a maximum factor of 1.66 for skilled workers, 1.07 from 1944, and 1.77 and 1.34 for unskilled workers. Prisoners were thus nominally cheaper than free German workers, but not by so much that extraordinary profits could have been made from prisoner labor. Even if social security contributions paid by the employer, which did not have to be paid for prisoners, were not taken into account here, gross daily wages would never have been more than twice as high. This also changed

the reimbursement of part of the prisoners' pay by the SS after the IG had taken over the rations for the Monowitz camp³⁰⁶.

The situation was different in the SS industrial enterprises, such as the Deutsche Ausrüstungswerke (DAW), also located in Auschwitz, which may have served as a benchmark for the IG managers in 1941. Until the end of 1942, these SS-owned companies only paid a symbolic inmate wage, which amounted to 30 Reichspfennige per day, regardless of the inmate's level of qualification. Labour was therefore only an insignificant cost factor here, which enabled unrivalled low-cost production despite the correspondingly low labour productivity. This was a situation that private industry could not tolerate for long, especially as SS profits were far higher than the quotas permitted by the state. From

In 1943, the rates to be paid to prisoners were therefore gradually brought into line with the standards applicable to private companies³⁰⁷. However, IG was never able to benefit from such low labor costs through the use of prisoner labor. In practice, even the maximum nominal cost advantage of a factor of two stated above was unattainable. Finally, in order to estimate the economically effective labor costs, the relative work performance of the prisoners must be included in the calculation.

From the very beginning, it was clear to the IG managers and the responsible SS leaders that the work of prisoners could not be as productive as that of free laborers. Even after the first experiences with prisoners in the

³⁰³ Statistical Yearbook for the German Reich, 59 (1941/42), p. 392 f. The 1941/42 edition is the last one published during the war. The standard wages it contains for 1941 are adequate for a comparison, as wages changed only insignificantly until the end of the war.

³⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 381.

³⁰⁵ Piper, Industrieunternehmen, p. 103, assumes a daily wage of only **RM 5.10** for an eight-hour working day. This figure is likely to be somewhat too low due to the working hours involved; this would result in a weekly wage of around RM 30.

³⁰⁶ The deductions amounted to **RM 1.34**, which the SS calculated as real accommodation costs. Even if, as Piper, Arbeitseinsatz, p. 356, suggests, the IG actually spent less money on feeding the prisoners, it is unlikely to have made any great profit from this.

³⁰⁷ BAB, NS 3/176, p. 128; from 1.43 rates of RM 1.50/0.50 applied, from 1.743 RM 3,-/1,-, from 1.10.43 RM 4,-/1.50.

In the spring of 1941, however, the construction management had to realize that a relative work performance of 75 percent was illusory. The effects of prison conditions in a concentration camp on physical and mental performance had obviously been seriously underestimated. The combination of inadequate, practically fat- and protein-free nutrition, unhygienic and extremely crowded accommodation and the hard daily work on the construction site took its toll. The average life expectancy of a newly arrived and healthy prisoner was only around three months. His performance was significantly reduced after just a few days under these conditions. The long marches from the Auschwitz main camp to the construction site, which the prisoners had to cover on foot, especially in the first few months, further sapped their strength.

Even after the opening of the IG's own concentration camp Auschwitz III/ Monowitz in October 1942, which was located on the south-eastern edge of the construction site - just under one kilometer from the entrance to the actual work area - long distances prevented the prisoners from being deployed. In the meantime, the work sites were spread so widely over the area, which was several square kilometers in size, that many prisoners still had to walk about ten kilometers a day in inadequate clothing and poor footwear. At their workplaces, they then had to carry out the heaviest work with inadequate equipment - sometimes at walking pace and driven by constant beatings from the Kapos³⁰⁸ - which further reduced labor productivity. After working nine hours a day in winter and up to eleven hours a day in summer³⁰⁹, the prisoners still had the arduous journey home to the camp ahead of them, where - especially during the expansion phases of the camps - several more hours of camp-internal construction work³¹⁰ and not infrequently extended roll calls³¹¹ awaited them.

The sum of the factors mentioned impaired the inmates' ability to work in a way that could not be compensated for by extended working hours³¹². In addition, the effective working hours of the prisoners were hardly longer than those of the German workers: on the one hand, because their working hours were also extended during the war; on the other hand, because IG supervisory staff had to be permanently present to organize and monitor the deployment of labour. A shift system was therefore only implemented in the IG coal mines, where only a few guards were needed. In addition, there were no difficulties in securing the work site, as was the case at the Bu na construction site: The prisoners' quarters were usually located in close proximity to the mine entrances, allowing the SS men to approach and leave even when visibility was poor. From the mine shaft system itself there were

³⁰⁸ Nümbg. doc. NI- 10930, Doemming statement, 28.8.1 947, p. 1.

³⁰⁹ For example, in March 1943, the working hours were 10 1/2 hours: 6.30 a.m. - 12 noon and 1 p.m. - 6 p.m. Location and commandant's orders, StB 6/43, 27.3.1 943.

³¹⁰ Nümbg. doc. NI- 14287, Rossbach statement, 21.1. 1 948, p. 6.

³¹¹ Sometimes long roll call from 4.30 to 7.00 in the morning. Nümbg. doc. NI-7 1 84, statement Afrine, 5.6.1 947, p. 1.

³¹² The opinion of Piper, System, p. 45, cannot be endorsed on this point.

There was also no escape, which is why a few guards on the ground were enough to reliably prevent any escape attempts. On the factory premises in Monowitz, on the other hand, conditions were confusing and total control of the prisoners was not possible, not least because civilian workers were also employed there.

The information on work performance in the weekly reports of IG Auschwitz is correspondingly low³¹³. At the 14th construction meeting at the end of 1941, Max Faust, the chief engineer responsible for the construction site and the deployment of labor there, reported that the performance of the inmate workers was significantly lower. According to him, "50% of the output of German workers was achieved with free Poles and 30% *with* prisoners"³¹⁴. All attempts to increase work performance by increasing supervision and solving transportation problems did not have the hoped-for success. Karl Braus, one of the three directors of IG Auschwitz, stated on record that they had "easily accepted the fact that the output [*of the prisoners*] was lower"; he estimated it at around 60 percent³¹⁵.

Such a view also seems to have been widespread among the other employees of IG Auschwitz, as the camp commander of civilian Camp V and former Dachau inmate, Eduard v. Baarenfeld³¹⁶, confirmed. According to his

³¹³ The work performance of each individual inmate was recorded daily by the IG staff from 1943 and forwarded to the social department of IG Auschwitz. The data prepared there in Betram's office into statistics and diagrams were then sent to the management and sometimes also to the TEA. This extensive quantitative data, the existence of which has been proven by many witness reports, has apparently not been preserved. It is possible that they were destroyed or hidden at the end of the war; in any case, they were not to be found in the archives of the IG successor companies. The following explanations are therefore based on scattered references in contemporary documents and on witness statements made during the Nuremberg IG trial. Due to the consistency of the content of the reports submitted by both supporters and opponents of the use of prisoners within the IG, the data given there can be considered reliable.

³¹⁴ Nümbg. doc. NI- 11 130, 14th construction meeting, 16.12.1941, p. 5.

³¹⁵ Nümbg. doc. NI-14723, p. 5, Brau's testimony before the investigators at the Nuremberg Trial against IG Farben, August 19, 1947.

³¹⁶ Eduard v. Baarenfeld had had an eventful life: from 1934-35 he had been Governor of Lower Austria, then Austrian Interior Minister and Vice-Chancellor until 1936. During his following two years as envoy to Hungary, he tried "to the best of his ability" to fight for Austria's independence. He also demonstrated his opposition to National Socialism through his leading role in the Lower Austrian Heimatschutz. Five weeks after the "annexation" of his homeland to the German Reich, he was arrested on April 22, 1938. From the beginning of September 1938 until the end of 1939, he was sent to the punishment company at Dachau concentration camp, then to Flossenbürg concentration camp for heavy quarry work until March 1940. After a previous leave of absence, the SS finally released him in May 1941 "on condition" that he and his family "not live in Austria, not make contact with Austrian Catholic circles" and "not get into trouble with the Gestapo". Through relationships with senior IG employees, Baarenfeld finally managed to obtain a position "as camp leader of Camp 1 (German camp)" in August 1942. After a few months, he was taken on as an employee by Rossbach, the head of the followers' department. Baarenfeld was "politically strongly opposed" by various IG employees. Through his responsibility for "delousing, gassing bugs etc. and vaccinating the workforce", he also came into contact with prisoners who were sent to the same "delousing facility" as the IG employees at certain times. There, Baarenfeld met SS-Hauptscharführer Remmele, whom he "still had the most unpleasant memories of" from Dachau. In the following conversation, he expressed his horror at the thousands of
Murder of the daily arriving transports of Jews. See Nümbg. doc. NI-9817, Baarenfeld statement, S. 1 ff.

As a reminder, "it was generally expected that the prisoners' work performance would average around 50% of that of a normal worker"³¹⁷. The actual performance was probably considerably lower,

This was because the senior staff obtained their knowledge mainly from the work sheets that had to be completed by each foreman, on which the performance of the individual prisoners had to be entered daily. According to prisoners, a considerable number of the IG foremen took pity on the prisoners and entered a work rate of 75 percent in order to spare them punishments by the SS, which were imposed for repeated rates of 60 percent. However, some foremen – **who** were accordingly feared by the prisoners – also entered the actual quota, which was often only 20 percent. A look at other construction sites shows that such figures were not the arbitrary excesses of particularly unscrupulous masters. According to this, 20 percent seems to be a typical figure for the use of concentration camp inmates on large construction sites in Upper Silesia. In any case, the subsidiary of IG Farbenindustrie "Luranil", which was involved in the recruitment of workers, reported very similar experiences at the beginning of 1944. According to this report, the prisoners from KL Groß Rosen employed on the IG project in Dyhernfurth produced a relative performance of only 16 to 28 percent³¹⁸. In his overview study, Falk Pingel also assumes a performance of far below 50 percent, which could drop to 20 percent³¹⁹.

At first glance, these figures lead to a surprising conclusion: the use of concentration camp inmates at IG Auschwitz was not profitable³²⁰. Even if the labor productivity of the individual inmate commissions varied greatly, the available data do not allow any other interpretation. Since the factory management had to transfer between 50 and 90 percent of the wages for free workers to the concentration camp, the prisoners' labor productivity would also have had to be in this range to make economic sense. As we have seen, however, 50 percent was already the upper limit of what a prisoner could achieve with all his strength, often in immediate fear of death. From 1944 onwards, the coal mines of the IG may have been an exception, where unskilled workers had to toil until they dropped under permanent supervision and were seamlessly replaced by "unused" men. Compared to the total number of prisoners used by IG Auschwitz, however, this only played a minor role.

³¹⁷ Nümbg. doc. NI-98 1 7, Baarenfeld statement, 2.8. 1 947, p. 6.

³¹⁸ Nümbg. doc. NJ- 1 43 1 0, memorandum from Luranil Dyhernfurth, 7.2. 1 944.

³¹⁹ Cf. Pingel, *Häftlinge*, p. 139.

³²⁰ The economic historian Mark Spoerer comes to a similar conclusion with regard to other companies that employed concentration camp prisoners; see Spoerer, *Unternehmen*.

Under no circumstances can it be said that IG Farben made a large profit from prisoner labor, as can be found in the Polish literature on Auschwitz in particular³²¹. This result is not altered by the potential savings for the company from inadequate or absent safety precautions and work clothing, as cited by various authors. The extremely high costs of converting and expanding Camp IV into a concentration camp that met the security requirements of the SS, the more frequent absences of prisoners due to illness and epidemics, the constant changes in the work detachments³²², the loss of valuable construction and assembly materials due to the theft of prisoners for Camp IV, and the limited working hours and deployment options due to the security interests of the SS far outweighed the costs saved as a result. In addition, the prisoners worked reasonably efficiently in those areas where their working conditions were almost humane, such as in the specialized detachments. However, apart from minimal savings on inmate rent, these caused the IG almost the same expenditure on tools and materials as for civilian workers.

The economic mismatch between the expenditure that the company The fact that the management had to operate the prisoner work force and the yield of the inhuman drudgery on the construction site had already been noticed by the IG managers. This realization on the part of the management formed the basis of the extensive but unsuccessful attempts to economize the use of prisoners. Even the promotion and at least indirect involvement of the factory management in "extermination through labor" could not change this. The ruthless exploitation of human labor, the subsequent murder of the prisoners who had lost their strength and their immediate replacement by "unused" fellow prisoners could only limit the financial losses, but not turn them into profits.

Reasons for the use of prisoners

This almost inevitably leads to the question of why IG Auschwitz continued to use prisoners despite the early realization of their unproductivity. At different times, different factors determined the use of concentration camp prisoners. Before and at the start of the construction work, the prospect of cheap labor was decisive for the IG management. After the authorities pointed to the Auschwitz concentration camp as a potential source of

³²¹ 1 Piper, *Employment*, p. 34 ff. The argumentation there assumes a profit-oriented approach.

"Predatory exploitation" of the prisoners. Piper completely misjudges the economic framework of IG Auschwitz when he speaks of "profits" from the use of prisoners. Reading the book, one gets the impression that IG Auschwitz's involvement in the crimes at Auschwitz could only have been due to the company's capitalist economic framework. But precisely this cannot be confirmed on the basis of the sources. Even Greiner, *IG-Joe*, p. 8, says that forced labor (including that of concentration camp inmates) "yielded the greatest profits".

³²² Nümbg. doc. NI- 14516, Schneider statement, 4.3.1 948, p. 3.

tielle Quelle von Arbeitskräften³²³ the IG had entered into negotiations with the responsible SS departments. It quickly became clear that the prisoners would only have to pay what seemed at the time to be a comparatively low wage, which would be independent of the hours worked. In addition, there was no need to pay for food and accommodation, as the SS wanted to pay for both. From the point of view of the management of IG Auschwitz in the spring of 1941, everything spoke in favor of using these cheap, apparently uncomplicated workers, who were also available on site without having to create expensive living space for them. Especially in view of the higher construction costs for this Buna plant, located far to the east of the Reich, which IG had accepted for reasons of corporate strategy, this supposed competitive advantage over other locations must have been tempting³²⁴. Since the active and benevolent support of all the authorities involved was secured by skillfully exploiting the IG board's connections to the highest authorities of the Nazi economic apparatus, it is not surprising that this cooperation was initially perceived as "beneficial" by the IG and SS³²⁵.

Soon after the construction management had deployed the first prisoners for leveling work on the future IG plant site in April 1941, it became clear that this deployment was not quite as easy as it had initially seemed. The long marches to the site, the poor state of health due to inadequate food and accommodation, and the high security requirements imposed by the SS prevented work performance that would have met the economic demands of the IG directors. Dürrfeld and his staff attempted to overcome the difficulties arising from the incommensurable views of the economically minded IG and the security and ideological arguments of the SS through many costly measures, including the construction of the IG's own Camp IV (Auschwitz 111/Monowitz), which cost five million RM. Although these attempts were not successful, prisoners continued to be deployed. One reason for this was the situation on the labor market, which had deteriorated further in 1942/43. After the end of the Nazi regime's rapid blitzkrieg successes, further cohorts were drafted and the seemingly endless stream of prisoners of war ebbed away. The

³²³ It is not clear from the sources from which side the initiative for the use of KL prisoners came. According to Carl Krauch, the SS in the person of Kranefuß approached him with this offer, Nümbg. doc. NI-4033. According to Otto Ambros' recollection, the labor office referred the IG to the concentration camp, Nümbg. doc. NI-9542; this would be consistent with the statement of the President of the Silesian State Labor Office, Nuremberg doc. NI- 14 187, 1 2.3.4 1, which states: "I contacted the camp commandant some time ago about questions of labor deployment and reached full agreement." In any case, the existence of a concentration camp for Jews and Poles had been known at least since 16. 1.4 1 known to the management of IG Farben. Nümbg. doc. NI- 11784, 18.1. 1 941.

³²⁴ The same Buna capacity as in Auschwitz could have been achieved in Hüls by expanding the existing facilities at a fraction of the cost; this was not approved by the state authorities for reasons of air protection strategy. Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 11 1 2, file note ter Meer, 6.2. 1941.

³²⁵ In his report on the founding meeting of IG Auschwitz on 7.4.4 1 Otto Ambros speaks of a "beneficial" cooperation between IG and SS. Nuremberg doc. NI-1 1 1 18, Ambros an ter Meer, 12.4. 1 941.

Hundreds of thousands of soldiers, especially Soviet Russian soldiers, who were imprisoned in the German camps had already died for the most part as a result of the miserable conditions in German captivity. Even for large-scale rearmament projects, labor, whether of German or other nationality, was therefore becoming increasingly scarce. Prisoners were therefore a welcome addition to the workforce, and no longer just at IG Auschwitz³²⁶.

State authorities now also put the factory management under increased pressure, after which the factory threatened to fall behind its deadlines. The leaders of IG Auschwitz therefore had an extraordinary interest in every available worker, especially as their plans for the construction of a highly complex chemical combine based on the latest technical achievements did not necessarily meet the state's interest in starting production as quickly as possible³²⁷. In addition to these entrepreneurial factors, however, the special character of the man in charge of IG Auschwitz - according to close associates - also played a role. The engineer Dürrfeld, who was promoted to plant manager for the first time, apparently also sought to satisfy his personal ambition by completing the plant on time³²⁸. Despite the constant complaints of his chief engineer Faust about the poor work performance of the prisoners, Dürrfeld did not allow himself to be dissuaded from continuing to employ them. After the end of the war, his decisions were increasingly characterized by activism rather than rationality. Dürrfeld clearly felt compelled to act by the situation in Auschwitz, as he expressed in words that were deeply engraved in the memory of one of his colleagues: "We'll sort it out. They [*the prisoners*] get more food; we take good care of them. There is no manpower. We have to move forward as fast as we can; we can't have any slumps; we have to see how it goes."³²⁹ In his constant striving for new labor and material supplies, Dürrfeld apparently had no more room to reconsider the decisions he had made up to that point.

In his line of action, the lack of free labor and the increasing time pressure justified the use of prisoners - even under inhumane conditions. Although Dürrfeld had correctly recognized that the main reason for the prisoners' low work performance was their poor supply and accommodation situation, he did nothing to remedy the situation. The announcement to provide better living conditions remained an empty phrase. Nevertheless, Dürrfeld did not give up his claim to have prisoners who were as strong and able to work as possible. In his efforts to fulfill the expectations he had set himself, he now lost all scruples. For Dürrfeld, the prisoners from Monowitz were completely

³²⁶ The use of concentration camp prisoners at IG Farben became a model for many subcamp foundations at other armaments factories; see Pingel, *Häftlinge*, p. 125 f.

³²⁷ Nuremberg Doc. NI-14551, 60/6 1st weekly report, July 26, 1942, in reaction to Himmler's visit on July 18, 1942.

³²⁸ Cf. the statement by his colleague Karl Braus: "Dürrfeld is a tragic character [...] Dürrfeld is only accused out of his ambition." Nümbg. doc. NI- 14725, statement by Braus, August 19, 1947, p. 4.

³²⁹ Nümbg. doc. NI-1 4725, statement by Braus, 19.8. 1 947, p. 6.

lost their *raison d'être* as human beings and apparently only appeared to him as mere disposable material. Together with his negotiating partner in the WVHA, Gerhard Maurer, who, like Dürfeld, declared himself a benefactor of the prisoners after the war, he created a system of exploitation that could hardly be surpassed in its perfidy. Whereas prisoners who had previously been absent due to exhaustion, illness or death had only been replaced by new contingents from time to time, the new procedure was intended to ensure constant labor productivity.

The management of IG Auschwitz received a guarantee from Maurer that prisoners who were no longer able to work would be returned to the main camp. In exchange, the construction management was allocated new, "unused" prisoner contingents³³⁰. In other words, Dürfeld and Maurer declared the prisoners to be consumables that were to be replaced at regular intervals. This agreement served both sides: IG could continue to use the majority of prisoners for factory construction without any protective measures and under completely inadequate living conditions. In this way, it was able to minimize its expenses for the use of prisoners, even though it was not possible to work profitably. The SS profited because the IG helped them to "exhaust" Jewish prisoners, as the economic instruction of the

WVHA was³³¹. If the prisoners who were then unfit for work did not die during work, in the Monowitz camp or in the infirmary there, they were taken to Birkenau where they were gassed and then incinerated. In contrast to the IG, the new method of "extermination through labor" had economic advantages for the Reich. Before the Jewish concentration camp inmates were murdered, which was what the planners of the "final solution" intended for them in any case, the state was able to "earn" part of the costs for the enormous investments for the industrial murder of the Jews.

For example, in December 1943 alone, IG Farben paid a total of 459,844.50 **RM** for the prisoners hired by the SS³³².

As perfidious as this cooperation between the IG and SS was, it paid off very little financially for the factory. The maintenance costs for deported prisoners, who no longer had any value in the eyes of the management, were saved. However, this did not affect the high fluctuation and the constant retraining of prisoners weakened by the strenuous deportation transport. On the contrary, the ever-worsening supply situation accelerated the exhaustion of the inmate workers, which is why actual labor productivity is unlikely to have increased. However, the immense speed of the "prisoner turnover" probably increasingly lost sight of reality. In addition, the factory management had now become so focused on the extermination work of the SS in Auschwitz that it no longer wanted to have such precise knowledge of the prisoners' actual living conditions.

³³⁰ Agreed during Obersturmführer Maurer's visit to IG Auschwitz on February 10, 1943. Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 4546, 90./9 1. weekly report, 21 .2.1 943.

³³¹ Nümbg. doc. R- 129, order WVHA, to the concentration camp commanders, 1 .5.1 942.

³³² According to Piper, *Arbeitseinsatz*, p. 355, the state's income from hiring out prisoners from KL Auschwitz amounted to a total of 30 to 40 million RM.

One of the few senior employees at IG Auschwitz who persistently rejected the use of prisoners right up to the final months was Chief Engineer Faust. Due to his constant presence on the construction site, the economic impracticality of the use of prisoners was clear to him. But even for his business management Despite all the arguments put forward by the business community, which were completely uninfluenced by sympathy for the prisoners³³³, plant manager Dürrfeld was closed-minded. The Nazi ideology of total war had become so deeply engrained in his mind and that of a considerable number of IG employees that they were determined to persevere to the last. Even when, in the second half of 1944, several attacks by Allied air units and the approach of Russian troops began to make the threat of defeat ever clearer, the combined machinery of production and extermination continued to run, and was even intensified. The use of prisoners, with all its "unpleasant" side effects, had become the norm for managers and was no longer questioned. On the contrary, the proportion of inmate workers in the total workforce reached its highest level during these months³³⁴. Anyone who, like Dürrfeld, was not openly informed by the SS about what was happening in Birkenau³³⁵ could find out about it from rumors, from prisoners, from colleagues, from Allied leaflets³³⁶ and from the pervasive, sweet smell that often wafted over the factory grounds – if they wanted to know. A mixture of pity – which was perhaps triggered in some by the approaching defeat and its consequences – and powerlessness determined the behavior of the majority of IG employees towards the prisoners in the final phase of the factory, without significantly improving their living conditions. The atmosphere of the final months was much more directly influenced by the actions of the few fanatics, whose hatred grew ever more intense as the Red Army approached.

Dürrfeld was probably one of them, whose unswerving adherence to goals once set brought immense misery and death to the prisoners in Monowitz. "Because he allowed himself to be guided by these false National Socialist ideas", a colleague from the factory management later commented³³⁷, Dürrfeld held out until the Red Army arrived³³⁸. This perseverance until the last moment also demonstrates that the way in which the inmates of the Monowitz concentration camp were employed by IG Auschwitz cannot be explained solely by economic or war-related constraints. The willing acceptance of prisoners who had been imprisoned in the concentration camp because of their "race" or political convictions, their ruthless exploitation to the point of physical death, and the fact that they were forced to work in the concentration camp were not the only reasons for this.

³³³ Nuremberg Doc. NI-1472 1, Braus testimony, August 19, 1947, p. 4.

³³⁴ On October 1, 1944, around 27 percent of the factory workforce were prisoners of KL Monowitz; cf. table 4 and diagram 2 in the appendix.

³³⁵ Nuremberg Doc. NI-34, Höß testimony, May 20, 1946, p. 12. Nuremberg Doc. NI-11 686, Schneider testimony, 27.3.1947, S. 93.

³³⁶ Nuremberg Doc. NI-1 1696, Coward testimony, 23.10.1947, p. 5.

³³⁷ Nuremberg Doc. NI-14725, Braus testimony, August 19, 1947, p. 3.

³³⁸ Dürrfeld carried out his last factory inspection with Chief Engineer Faust on January 23, 1945, five days after the evacuation of the concentration camp inmates by the SS. Nuremberg doc. NI-1 1956, Dürrfeld report, 7.2.1945.

The conscious acceptance of their annihilation was only conceivable and possible on the condition of a National Socialist conviction that it was possible to deal with to have to deal with "inferior objects".

This fixation on political goals obscured not only the ethical reprehensibility, but also the economic absurdity of the use of concentration camp prisoners. "Even under the conditions of the most modern large-scale capitalist technology", the "slave labor" of the prisoners in Auschwitz could therefore not be "profitably exploited"³³⁹. Although economic considerations often played a superficial role in the use of inmates, the extensive participation of IG Auschwitz in "extermination through labor" was based on other motives.

The end

The slogan issued by Dürrfeld to carry on regardless of the constantly changing military situation characterized the last months of IG Auschwitz. The attack by American bombers in August marked, in retrospect, the actual end of the factory expansion. From then on, assembly work continued, but the focus was on restoring the damaged areas of the factory. Despite the increasingly limited supply of materials, the repairs, which began immediately, apparently made good progress. However, on September 13, 1944, the industrial complex was the target of another air raid, which again caused numerous hits to the production facilities³⁴⁰. The transmission of the monthly construction reports from IG Auschwitz to GBChem then ceased. Although the repair and assembly of production machinery continued in all parts of the factory, the destruction of the almost operational plant obviously had a demoralizing effect on the German workers. The previously meticulously organized work on the huge construction site now turned into "unregulated, hectic, morbid activity", as the prisoner Primo Levi, who worked in the chemical laboratory, recalled³⁴¹. "All constructive work" on the highly complex plant "ceased", the new, as yet unused apparatus had to be repaired, pipes repaired and re-routed. In a "headlong rush", attempts were made to take protective measures, which soon proved to be "ridiculously pointless and void". The mood among the German workforce sank to a low point.

However, the attacks were much more existential for the prisoners. Damage to the supply lines for water, electricity and heating made their living conditions even more unbearable. For days, sometimes weeks, there was no water, light or warm food. Nevertheless, for those of the prisoners who were still strong enough to take an interest in such events, the Allied attacks meant "new strength and new hope". Even though the vast majority

³³⁹ In any case, the example of IG Auschwitz does not support Roth's thesis to the contrary, I.G. Auschwitz, p. 27.

³⁴⁰ Cf. Wyman, Auschwitz, p. 578.

³⁴¹ Cf. on this and the following: Levi, Mensch, p. 123 ff.

of the prisoners, completely numb from exhaustion, accepted the events with indifference and resumed their "now obviously pointless and senseless work", many German civilian workers and guards believed they could see "schadenfreude" on their faces. Their reaction was often escalating brutality, "Their rage d o u b l e d".

The chaotic conditions on the construction site inevitably led to further delays. By mid-December 1944, various plants were to be started up for the first time³⁴², even if fewer and fewer IG employees thought this was realistic. However, both the management and the company headquarters obviously considered the situation to be serious, but not desperate. Plans were made for the future: unimpressed by the approaching Soviet troops, IG chairman Ambros sought an increase in the income of the three directors of IG Auschwitz from the Reich Trustee of Labor for Upper Silesia. For the two "leading chemists" Eisfeld and Braus, an increase in pay of **RM** 4,000 to around **RM** 26,000 per year each was planned from January 1, 1945. Dürrfeld was to receive

"in view of his special merits in building up the Auschwitz plant, his leading position and his successful activities within the framework of the Upper Silesian industry", he received a total income of 33,000 **RM** through an increase of 6,000 **RM**³⁴³.

Two further American raids hit the plant on December 18 and 26, 1944, but were unable to bring its operations to a complete standstill. Despite the 940 hits and 44 destroyed buildings on the factory site, as shown by a US Air Force reconnaissance flight on January 14, 1945³⁴⁴, important areas were apparently still intact. The energy plants, the power station, the water and drinking water supply, the electricity supply and production in the smelting works and the carbide factory remained in operation, at least to a limited extent. However, the "low, dull rumble of the artillery" from the approaching front could now be heard "without interruption" on the construction site. Among the foreign forced laborers, hopes were rising that the war would end soon: The Poles had stopped working, the French were walking "with their heads held high again", and the British prisoners of war were already openly greeting the prisoners with the Victory sign. The latter, however, were not sure whether the withdrawal of the Germans, which was hoped for in the near future, would not mean death for them. Rumors of a planned execution of all prisoners before the evacuation filled the camp after former inmates from Majdanek were sent to

"Buna" had come³⁴⁵. The resistance movement in Monowitz therefore became active and tried to put Dürrfeld under pressure with regard to the imminent evacuation. In a letter, they threatened him that if he did not stand up for the protection of the camp inmates, "he and all his followers would be executed.

³⁴² USHMM, reel 71, Fabrication Department to Eisfeld, December 13, 1944.

³⁴³ APMO, D-Au III, Tygodniowe Sprawozdania (IG Farben), t.2, Ambros to Ordemann, 14. 12. 1944, p. 145.

³⁴⁴ Cf. Czech, Kalendarium, p. 961.

³⁴⁵ Cf. Wohl, Arbeit, p. 158.

responsible" for this³⁴⁶. There is no indication that Dürrfeld was impressed by this appeal.

At around the same time, the members of the "prisoner self-administration" also began preparations for a mass escape from the camp, which was intended to forestall the possible murder of the entire camp staff. The biggest problem here was overcoming the elaborate security installations. The prisoners pinned their hopes on a twelve-metre-high sheet metal chimney that was part of the hospital's disinfection plant. It stood so close to the perimeter fence that, if it fell over, it would have had to extend several meters beyond it. Cameos from a "Buna commando" had smuggled in wrenches, Vaseline and insulated pliers to cut the high-voltage wire. By the turn of the year 1944/45, the preparations were well advanced, the fastening nuts of the chimney had already been loosened and greased so that they could react quickly. The prisoners had also managed to organize some weapons and ammunition. Before attempting to break out, however, they wanted to make sure they received support from the Polish resistance groups and partisans outside the camp. However, the Armia Krajowa refused to help with a mass escape because "the weakened prisoners were unfit to fight"³⁴⁷. This was probably one of the reasons why the camp's internal resistance group ultimately considered the risk of an uprising on the day of the evacuation to be too high. The signal to revolt was not given.

Despite the worsening war situation, the factory management stuck to its targets for the completion of the production facilities. Ignoring the slowly collapsing lines of defense, they again named new

"Start-up dates": January 22 for methanol, mid-February 1945 for Buna³⁴⁸. However, this did not happen, as the Red Army's major offensive began on January 12. Although the Soviet troops had been advancing ever closer to the industrial area of eastern Upper Silesia since the summer of 1944 and extensive preparations for the attack had been reported by army reporters since the beginning of December, the Gauleiter was still optimistic after Christmas that the area around Auschwitz was "safe".

Apparently trusting in the defensive capabilities of the German Wehrmacht, the IG factory management allowed the restoration and assembly work to continue "according to plan". This did not even come to a standstill when, on January 14, the railroad lines were bombed up to 40 kilometers from the factory and the Russian troops had broken through the German defensive lines at various points. The next day, Wehrmacht columns were already moving past the factory to the west. It was only when reconnaissance aircraft were constantly circling over the site and the air battles could already be seen beyond the Vistula that the factory management reviewed the evacuation plans without stopping work. Even before the first Soviet air raid on the plant on the evening of January 16, 1945, all of the

³⁴⁶ Nümbg. doc. NI-14287, Rossbach statement, 21 .1.1948, p. 1 2.

³⁴⁷ Wohl, Labor, p. 159 f.

³⁴⁸ On this and the following: Nuremberg Doc. NI-1 1956, Dünnfeld Report, February 7, 1945.

However, large parts of the workforce, including foreign and ethnic German workers as well as many members of the Reich-German company, were forced to flee to the west. The next day, after the Reich Defense Commissioner had ordered the evacuation of Katowice and the clearing of the area around Auschwitz of the "non-working" population, the companies commissioned by the IG began to move their equipment and workers to safety.

Walther Dürrfeld, on the other hand, wanted to hold out until the very end: He therefore had the site cordoned off and the prisoners moved back onto the factory premises to continue the work. To underline his ban on "any withdrawals and departures", he requested "police help to cordon off the factory premises, the arterial roads and the railroad stations in the vicinity". Although he was only one of the three directors of IG Auschwitz, he issued this order, like many others before him, without consulting Eisfeld and Braus, who thought it was "madness" to hold out in Auschwitz³⁴⁹. Nevertheless, the exodus of workers and companies continued, so that only 1,02 of the Volkssturm, which on paper was 1,000 strong, remained. The SS administration also began to prepare for the evacuation. On January 17, SS-Standortälteste Baer personally searched the colonies.

The prisoners' medical officers for the evacuation march were selected from the ranks of the guards in order to ensure a "crackdown" on the prisoners who remained behind³⁵⁰. The prisoner doctors at HKB Monowitz were then ordered to release all prisoners fit to march into the camp. Only the following remained in the infirmary

seriously ill prisoners who were cared for by doctors who were also unable to march³⁵¹.

While the IG-Bau management continued to send the British prisoners of war to work on January 18, the prisoners remained in the Monowitz camp, as the SS were already waiting for the order to march off. Although the Gauleiter continued to speak of a serious, but "by no means alarming" situation, he decided The management now ordered the closure of the Janina mine and "paralyzed" the facilities there³⁵². In the late afternoon, the SS ordered all the prisoners of the Monowitz camp to line up on the roll call square³⁵³. In columns of 1,000 prisoners each, supervised by a few orderlies, they began their march west towards Gleiwitz. Those who could no longer keep up with the general pace and were unable to catch up

was shot by the SS guards. On the first stretch to Gleiwitz, the SS had five collective graves with a total of 50 prisoners laid out³⁵⁴, but most of the dead were simply left in the ditch.

The morning after the evacuation, Russian planes attacked the factory again. Hits in the factory, the residential camps and the power plant facilities

³⁴⁹ Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 4725, statement by Braus, August 19, 1947, pp. 1-3.

³⁵⁰ Czech, calendar, p. 966 f.

³⁵¹ Cf. Jaworski, *Erinnerungen*, p. 266; Makowski, *Organization*, p. 131; also Czech, *Kalendarium*, p. 969.

³⁵² Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 1956, Dürrfeld report, 7.2.1945.

³⁵³ There are different accounts of the date of the evacuation. The prisoners' reports mention the evening of January 18. Dürrfeld, on the other hand, mentions the following day in his report.

³⁵⁴ Nuremberg doc. NI- 1 1956, Dürrfeld report, 7.2. 1945; cf. Czech, *Kalendarium*, p. 971.

led to the failure of the electricity and water supply in the camps and the city Auschwitz³⁵⁵. The Monowitz camp had also taken some hits: Two barracks had completely disappeared, two others were completely burnt out; fortunately, however, all four had been empty³⁵⁶. After the attack, the watchtowers were no longer manned. At this time, there were still a total of 850 prisoners in the infirmary, including 18 doctors. Their supplies were unsecured: The last bread ration had been issued at midday and the heating system was no longer in operation; the Germans had abandoned the sick prisoners to their fate.

On the morning of January 20, the Reich Defense Commissioner announced via the Amt Krauch" with the code word for the "paralysis" of IG Auschwitz: "Lothar". After all the "responsible gentlemen" had been informed and detailed instructions had been given, the "L-measures" began. Dürrfeld scheduled the evacuation of the female workforce for the following day. After the train had departed, Dürrfeld tried to calm the "very nervous members of staff due to the many rumors". Although he announced in the "community hall" that "the situation had stabilized", a few hours later Soviet troops broke through the German lines just ten kilometers north-east of the factory. He then ordered the British prisoners of war to leave as well.

On the afternoon of January 21, 1945, the mayor of Auschwitz informed the plant manager that he had received the order for "his administration" to march out. Only then does Dürrfeld seem to have become aware of the immediate threat to the factory premises from the Red Army. In any case, he now felt compelled to make preparations for the withdrawal of the workforce on the same day. After telephone consultation with the Reich Defense Commissioner, the evacuation and closure of the factory premises was finally "deemed appropriate in the current situation". An order to destroy the plant facilities

was expressly not issued, possibly in the hope that the front could still be held³⁵⁷. Until then, he had vehemently opposed the proposal of his fellow director Braus, who had already advocated a well-prepared and timely evacuation weeks earlier. No IG employee was

It was allowed to take his personal belongings "to the West in peace"³⁵⁸, even family members were only allowed to leave on January 16 for "air protection reasons".

After Dürrfeld had finally decided to evacuate, most of the German and foreign factory employees had to make their way to the old Reich territory "as quickly as possible", leaving their belongings behind. Due to the late decision, the factory had to be "evacuated almost immediately"; on the evening of January 21, the first special trains left Auschwitz station for the west. Those who could no longer find a place on them joined the

³⁵⁵ Cf. Czech, Kalendarium, p. 976.

³⁵⁶ Cf. on this and the following: Levi, Mensch, p. 1 62 ff.

³⁵⁷ Levi, Mensch, p. 1 59, however, reports a rumor that "sabotage mines" had been installed in January 1945. In fact, the destruction of the factory facilities was prepared in the second half of December. Nümbg. doc. NI-1 1956, Dürrfeld report, 7.2.1945.

m Nümbg. doc. NI-10929, statement by Braus, August 23, 1947, p. 7.

the influx of around one and a half million refugees from the threatened areas" of Upper Silesia mostly poured out in a "foot trek" towards the Reich territory. Not only prisoners, but also prisoners of war and other "uncounted dead, fallen horses and overturned vehicles lined the way"³⁵⁹.

On the night of January 22, Eisfeld and Braus put together a transport convoy from the remaining trucks. This was to transport the "L goods", "secret material" and rations for the workforce to the west. However, the combat commander in charge, Colonel Fehmer, confiscated the convoy in Auschwitz. It was agreed that the important goods would be loaded onto railroad wagons and the vehicles handed over to the Wehrmacht. Dürrfeld spent the night in the command post.

On January 23, 1945, Chief Engineer Faust and Plant Manager Dürrfeld walked across the IG Auschwitz factory premises for the last time, almost exactly four years after Ambros had chosen this site for Buna IV. All the "rolling stock" was assembled and transported away with the help of Reichsbahn employees. The following night, Dürrfeld reported on the situation to the deputy Gau leader Metzner, the Reich Defence Commissioner, District President Müller Haccius, and the Chairman of the Armaments Commission, Director General Dr. Malzacher, and announced the "completion of the evacuation of the Auschwitz plant". What remained was a plant almost ready for production for the manufacture of synthetic fuel, Buna and a variety of other chemical substances. Only "minor remaining work of about two to three weeks" was missing before the "final start of Buna production". Apart from methanol and some preliminary and intermediate products for Buna production, the huge factory complex had produced nothing. With a financial outlay of a good half a billion Reichsmarks, IG Auschwitz had probably become the largest investment ruin of the German war effort. The "beneficial" cooperation with the SS promised at the founding meeting had cost the lives of many thousands of people - and inextricably linked IG Farbenindustrie with the murder of European Jews.

The "balance sheet" of the IG camp Monowitz

Of the approximately 10,000 prisoners of the Monowitz camp who were evacuated to the "Old Reich" on January 19, 1945, only a small proportion had spent more than a few months there. According to information provided by former employees of the prisoner records office, a total of around

³⁵⁹ IfZ, MA-625, p. 6125-3 1, General Prosecutor's Office Katowice to Reich Ministry of Justice, February 1, 1945.

35,000 prisoners came to Monowitz³⁶⁰. Apart from a few transfers to other camps, about 25,000 men thus died while working in the Buna factories, in the Monowitz camp, in the infirmary or through selection.

lost their lives. The reports of former camp inmates and the estimates in the historical literature generally coincide³⁶¹. The accuracy of this figure can also be confirmed by comparing it with the available information on life expectancy and selections of prisoners in Monowitz.

This is based on an average of 3,000 prisoner laborers in 1943 and 7,000 in 1944. As explained in detail above, not all prisoners had the same chances of survival. Therefore, only the Jewish prisoners exposed to the greatest extermination pressure should be included in the calculation. After deducting the Reich-German and other non-Jewish prisoners who lived in much better conditions, as well as the prisoner functionaries, around 80 percent, i.e. 2,400 and 5,600 respectively, are likely to have belonged to the category of "simple" prisoners. The statements consistently assume an average life expectancy of three to four months for Monowitz. This would mean that the number of "ordinary" prisoners would have been "eliminated" about three times a year through death or selection. This would result in a figure of 7,200 for 1943 and 16,800 for 1944, i.e. a total of 24,000, which corresponds surprisingly precisely with the information given in the witness reports.

The number of prisoners selected in the infirmary would also match this. According to the transfer book, the respective SS doctor sent exactly 7,295 prisoners from Monowitz to Birkenau between November 1942 and October 1944, in the initial phase still to the main camp³⁶². This figure does not include camp executions, to which several thousand prisoners are also likely to have fallen victim. In addition, there would be those who died or were murdered directly on the factory premises or in the camp, according to the available information at least 1,64,7³⁶³. These figures do not contradict the assumption of around 23,000 to 25,000 deaths. The work in the coal mines attached to IG Auschwitz probably resulted in several thousand more deaths.

³⁶⁰ Nümbg. doc. NI-7967, statement Schulhof, 21. 6. 1 947, p. 3, which assumes 25 000. Nümbg. doc.

NI- 1 2070, statement by Budziaszek alias Buthner, 27. 10. 1 947, who assumes 23,000 dead. The testimony of former employees of IG Auschwitz mentions similar figures, in Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 1046, statement by Dürrfeld, February 24, 1 947, of 20,000 and in Nümbg. doc. NI-1 1686, statement by Schneider, March 27, 1947, of 30,000. The SS doctor Fischer, who was responsible for Monowitz, assumed 10,000 for the time of his presence in Monowitz, spring 1943 to fall 1,944, StA Frankfurt a.M., Buthner-Ermittlungsakten, p. 1425. The statement in Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 2069, statement Herzog, 21. 1 0.1 947, of 1 20 000 must be described as exaggerated; likewise the view in Nümbg. doc. NI-1 1081, statement by Zlotolow, 2.9. 1 947, p. 3, that 40,000 prisoners died during the work in the Bunawerke alone.

³⁶¹ Cf. most recently Hayes, Zwangsarbeit, p. 145; also Herbert, Arbeit, p. 402.

³⁶² Nümbg. doc. NI- 14997, HKB-Monowitz-Buch.

³⁶³ Nümbg. doc. NI- 15295, Totenbuch Monowitz.

prisoners may have died. A figure of 30,000 prisoners who died as a direct result of their work for the IG is therefore probably not too high.

The fate of the prisoners after the evacuation

The prisoners who remained in the camp after the evacuation were no longer prisoners after the Germans left. At first this meant little more than that they had to fend for themselves. For example, figures protected with blankets against the icy cold searched all the camp barracks for food and other supplies³⁶⁴. In the SS troops' living quarters, which had now been left open, they found the half-full soup plates on the tables and the beer in the mugs frozen to yellow ice. But such "expeditions" were not without danger: 18 Frenchmen who wanted to fill their empty stomachs fell into the hands of some SS men, who presumably also wanted to stock up there on their retreat. They killed the prisoners with shots to the back of the neck and left them lying in the snow.

Death also lurked everywhere in the barracks. Many of those left behind had infectious diseases that endangered their fellow camp members. The latrines quickly became overcrowded and could no longer be emptied. Dysentery and typhus sufferers therefore left their infectious traces in most of the infirmary barracks. Only very few had disinfectants at their disposal. It was up to the individual's resourcefulness and physical strength to ensure their survival. Some managed to build a functioning oven from the camp materials, others managed to organize coal and wood and, above all, potatoes; only a few hundred metres from the camp, prisoners had opened a large potato store³⁶⁵. Those who were reasonably fit were able to venture further out. There was a group of those who had been operated on at the hospital who fought their way through the heavy snow to the former British POW camp: "It became a profitable enterprise. They returned in khaki suits, with a cart full of wonderful things they had never seen before: margarine, custard powder, bacon, soy flour and schnapps."³⁶⁶ This influx of food gave the camp's usual bartering a new lease of life, although not everyone was able to benefit from it. Of the 850 inmates in the infirmary, more than 200 died within a week³⁶⁷.

While an SS detachment in the Fürstengrube subcamp was murdering the vast majority of the prisoners still living there, a reconnaissance unit from the 60th Army of the 1st Ukrainian Front entered the Monowitz camp on January 27, 1945, around nine o'clock in the morning. By the evening of the same day, after battles with retreating German units around the main camp, all the camps in the vicinity of Auschwitz had been liberated by the Red Army.

³⁶⁴ For details of the events in the Monowitz camp after the evacuation, see Levi, Mensch, p. 1 62 ff.

³⁶⁵ Cf. Levi, Mensch, p. 1 74.

³⁶⁶ Levi, Mensch, p. 176, which also shows the comparatively good conditions under which the British lived in Auschwitz.

³⁶⁷ Cf. Czech, Kalendarium, p. 994.

Of the almost 10,000 prisoners who had begun the evacuation march in Monowitz, the majority remained together until the first overnight station in the already evacuated Gleiwitz I camp³⁶⁸. Here, together with prisoners from other subcamps of KL Auschwitz, they were divided up onto various trains. Crammed together in open freight wagons, transports departed from here for the large camps in the Altreich. The route often resembled an odyssey, as the Mauthausen and Gross-Rosen camps, for example, stopped accepting new prisoners due to overcrowding; these transports were then diverted to Dachau and Nordhausen. Up to a quarter of the prisoners died as a result of the days-long journey through the cold and without food. The weaker prisoners who could no longer make it into the overcrowded wagons were massacred by SS men on the platform with volleys of gunfire³⁶⁹. For at least one train, the journey ended shortly after Gliwice, as partisans had blown up the track. During the subsequent onward march and exchanges of fire between the SS and Polish resistance, some prisoners managed to escape into the forest.

Those who survived the transport in the open wagons and the "death marches" were sent back to work in the concentration camps of the old Reich. The living conditions in the underground projects, which were pursued with great vigor and for which the armaments planners now mainly used prisoners, were unacceptable. While the "Third Reich" slowly fell apart, countless thousands of prisoners died there. Only a few former inmates of the Monowitz concentration camp had the strength to experience liberation in the spring of 1945.

³⁶⁸ Cf. on this and the following Czech, *Kalendarium*, p. 985 f.

³⁶⁹ Cf. on this and the following Wohl, *Arbeit*, p. 171 ff.

V. IG Auschwitz and the Monowitz camp in the Nazi concentration camp system

KL Monowitz was an integral part of the ramified camp complex in Auschwitz and had a decisive influence on its character after the end of the war. It was the only place where the prisoners who died during the "three periods" of the concentration camp system of "security, labour and extermination" were fully realized¹. Auschwitz was only able to develop into the largest and most complex concentration camp thanks to its close cooperation with the IG Farben industry.

In contrast to the other new camps established at this time, the establishment of the Auschwitz concentration camp in the industrial area of Upper Silesia in May 1940 had no economic background. The decisive factor was rather the demands of the security police for a "reception and quarantine camp" for the large number of Poles who had been imprisoned since the beginning of the war. These were initially to be collected in the existing barracks located directly on the new eastern border of the Reich before a decision was made on their onward transportation to other camps. During the first three quarters of a year, the prisoners' main task was to rebuild and extend the half-ruined buildings, which dated back to the time of Austro-Hungarian rule. In addition, they were used for agricultural work to a limited extent. At the end of 1940, the camp had almost 8,000 prisoners, almost all of them Polish. At this time, there were no plans to make Auschwitz the center of the National Socialist concentration camp system.

The turning point in the development of KL Auschwitz came in January and February 1941 with the plans of the IG to build its fourth Buna plant in the immediate vicinity of the camp. This also drew the attention of the Reichsführer SS to the previously small camp in eastern Upper Silesia. Himmler suddenly saw new prospects for his long-cherished hopes of being able to make better use of the prisoners' labor potential by cooperating with a private company to achieve his goal of an independent economic power base for the SS. He therefore readily supported the IG's request for prisoner laborers for the construction of its factory and ordered the generous expansion of the camp. By the turn of 1941/42 it had already grown to become by far the largest concentration camp in the German Reich, with around 20,000 inmates. The number of prisoners employed by the IG also rose, with some fluctuations, to 1,600 by mid-1942. Despite considerable difficulties with the transportation and productivity of the prisoners, both the SS and the IG wanted to continue their cooperation. In June 1942, both sides therefore agreed to set up a camp right next to the factory premises in order to make the use of prisoners more efficient. IG had Camp IV, originally planned as civilian barrack accommodation, expanded into the triple-security Monowitz concentration camp (initially referred to as "Camp Buna").

¹ Cf. Pingel, Häftlinge, p. 144 f.

The war situation, which was increasingly turning against the German Reich in the autumn of 1942, now made it seem necessary to use a higher proportion of the concentration camp inmates productively for armaments production. The experience gained in Auschwitz since the spring of 1941 with the leasing of inmates to a private company evidently spurred on the plans of the WVHA, which had been founded in the meantime. Its head, Oswald Pohl, therefore worked in close coordination with Himmler to further establish industrial companies in or near existing concentration camps, following the example of IG Auschwitz. However, the SS's attempt to retain control over the prisoners and gain access to modern and expensive production facilities failed in the face of resistance from industry and its advocate, the Reich Minister of Armaments and Munitions Albert Speer. The SS economic planners could have seen from the example of Auschwitz just how incompatible Himmler's power-oriented plans were with the economic necessities of the war economy: In the meantime, the IG had also achieved the construction of a camp right next to the factory.

After Himmler's defeat in the dispute with Speer over the concentration camp workforce, satellite camps of the existing concentration camps were set up near armaments factories, almost everywhere in the Reich. At the same time as the new tasks, the total number of camp inmates increased many times over in the next two years, eventually reaching around 700,000 in 1945. Despite this enormous expansion of the economic use of the prisoners, Himmler no longer had any urgent interest in their efficient use in private companies, as they were largely removed from his control. The SS leadership's brief vacillation in 1942 between an actual economization of concentration camp work and the continuation of its systematic mass murders therefore did not last long. From the spring of 1943, the racial logic of murdering the Jews in the camps clearly took precedence again: the planners of the "Final Solution" in the Reich Main Security Office had regained their influence.

In order not to risk an open confrontation with Speer, who was steadily gaining power, large numbers of prisoners were made available to the rearmament companies, but nothing was done to ensure their efficient deployment. On the contrary, the living conditions in the camps were so miserable that the prisoners had to forfeit their labor and thus their right to live within a very short time. As a result, the SS planners had developed a new method of killing Jews, which also brought financial benefits for the Reich treasury. On the surface, "extermination through labor" took into account the economic demands of armament necessities, but did not hinder the implementation of the "final solution". Where the employing companies did not take the initiative to provide better accommodation and food, the prisoners only had a life expectancy of a few weeks or months. In Monowitz, where the industrial murder of hundreds of thousands of people in the immediate vicinity meant that there were always enough people capable of working, the management obviously saw no need to even provide for them.

basic necessities of life. For the majority of the Jewish prisoners who were deployed at IG Auschwitz, it was merely an intermediate station on the way to the gas chambers at Birkenau.

It was not only its proximity to the sealing facilities that made KL Monowitz a unique camp: because it was the first large camp planned and built specifically for the use of prisoners at a private armaments factory, it developed into a model for the many other concentration camp outposts that were built at almost all major industrial companies in the German Reich up to 1945. Like no other camp, it thus embodied the third period in the development of the concentration camp system: "Armaments production and mass extermination"². In contrast to the camps that had existed until then, a very high proportion of around 80 per cent of the prisoner workforce was not employed in the camp, but in the labor detachments of private companies. The security of the camp inmates, which had been a priority until then, was thus pushed further and further into the background due to the immense increase in the number of prisoners. With the expansion of deportations to more and more countries, the diversity of languages increased to such an extent that the SS increasingly assigned organizational and control tasks to prisoner functionaries, most of whom were better qualified.

The chances of survival in the different labor detachments varied in an extreme manner: While they were still comparatively favorable in the internal and specialized detachments, the average life expectancy in the construction detachments fell to a few months, and in the mine detachments to just a few weeks. The decisive factor for assignment to a commando was not a prisoner's qualifications. Rather, by skillfully establishing a hierarchy of command and dependency, the SS had succeeded in making their racial ideology the determining factor in the camp as well. The respective position within the national socialist hierarchy of nations and races therefore largely determined the living and working conditions of a prisoner: Germans, other "Aryans" and, from mid-1942, Poles³ were therefore part of the privileged class, who were usually completely exempt from work as functional prisoners; in the actual work detachments on the construction site or in the mines, on the other hand, Jews were employed almost without exception.

Of this group, which was by far the largest in terms of numbers, only those who managed to change their work through connections, money or other means were able to survive. In many commandos, the focus from 1943 onwards was no longer on productive results, but on the "exhaustion" of the prisoners. Of the total of around 35,000 prisoners housed in Monowitz, around 25,000 fell victim to the inhumane living and working conditions either directly on the construction site, in the infirmary or during the selections for the gas chambers.

² Pingel, *Prisoners*, p. 118 ff.

³ Of the first large contingent of 728 Poles who were committed to KL Auschwitz on June 16, 1940, 267 prisoners survived the camp. In view of the life expectancy of a Jewish prisoner of a few weeks or months, this indicates comparatively cheap food and accommodation; cf. "Toasts to dead friends" in: *Der Spiegel*, 27/1997, pp. 56-60.

Unlike in the underground subcamps of KL Do ra-Mittelbau, for example, where the cruel conditions were already marked by the progressive collapse of the Nazi regime⁴, the majority of the prisoners in Monowitz did not die in the chaotic final phase of the war. Although the increasing number of prisoners in the Auschwitz camps in 1944 also led to an escalation of the supply shortages, the end of the deportation of the Hungarian Jews in the late summer of that year meant that the maximum extent of
was reached. Due to its location far to the east of the Reich territory, the **RSHA** no longer sent large groups of prisoners to Auschwitz from then on, but withdrew contingents from here. The high loss of life in Monowitz was therefore not the result of the crisis situation at the end of the war, but of the "everyday" use of labor: its lethal laws had developed from years of cooperation between the IG and SS, who consciously accepted or intended the "consumption" of the prisoners.

In Monowitz, the SS succeeded in an astonishing way in creating the illusion that their racial ideological goals could be reconciled with the economic interests of the private industry. The history of the Monowitz concentration camp documents the attempt to combine the destruction of the European Jewish population with the production of armaments. While the SS actually achieved their intended goal, the problems of using prisoners were considerably greater for IG Auschwitz than the economic benefits. In terms of the overall group, the employment of concentration camp prisoners had a devastating effect in the long term.

The close cooperation between the IG and the SS made the Auschwitz plant a double symbol of the company's - and German industry's - involvement in the crimes of the National Socialist regime. On the one hand, IG Auschwitz stands for the momentous decision of the company's board of directors to increasingly give in to the demands of the state aimed at rearmament and a war of conquest in order to preserve a supposed entrepreneurial freedom. The result of this policy was the loss of the traditional export-oriented business basis, which led to increasing dependence on state orders and ultimately to the "militarization of IG". The IG played a key role in the national socialist quest for self-sufficiency through synthetic raw materials. In the eyes of the Allies, the company therefore became synonymous with Hitler's aggressive great power policy. Secondly, although directly linked to the first point, IG Auschwitz represented the active participation of German industry in the SS program of "extermination through work" like no other factory. The methods of prisoner deployment developed here, which cost more than 25,000 lives in total, served as a model for many other private companies.

The question of responsibility for this development almost inevitably arises; it was not without reason that the Allied forces began investigating IG⁵ even before the end of the war. There is a general answer

⁴ Cf. Weisbrod, Funktionswandel, p. 10.

⁵ Cf. chapter VI. 1.

This is certainly not the case, at least if the historical context is not to be completely disregarded. In the winter of 1940/41, none of those involved could foresee where the company's decision in favor of the Auschwitz site would lead. Nevertheless, there were situations that acted as crossroads for future developments and for which the responsibilities can largely be reconstructed. To this end, the questions formulated at the beginning of this study need to be summarized once again.

When deciding to build the fourth Buna plant in Auschwitz, the IG board was aware of the existence of the concentration camp there. The possibility of using prisoners in the construction was one of the factors that tipped the scales in favor of the town in eastern Upper Silesia. As soon as Ambros, the board member in charge of the selection, was promised the use of prisoners by the authorities, the company management did everything in its power to make this a reality. In this respect, no pressure was exerted on the Group by government agencies. On the contrary, the IG took advantage of its close relations with the economic administration and in this way was able to overcome existing resistance.

From the very beginning, the management regarded the prisoners as second-class workers. They were only used for the hardest work, were made to work outside in all weathers without protective clothing and did not care about their needs. In order to obtain further contingents of supposedly cheap inmate labor from KL Auschwitz, the company supported the camp commandant Höß with extensive deliveries of materials. Without this exchange deal, the rapid expansion of Auschwitz into the largest concentration and later extermination camp would have been impossible.

Even during the first few months, the factory management had to recognize that the prisoners' work productivity fell far short of expectations. After various attempts at discipline had failed, the construction management of IG tried to set up a prisoner camp directly on the factory premises. Despite resistance from the camp SS, the company was allowed to do so. However, the initial investment of five million RM did not have the desired success. Although the IG had meanwhile also recognized the completely inadequate food and accommodation for the prisoners as the real reason for their poor work performance, it did nothing to improve their situation. When neither the reinforcement of plant security nor the granting of bonuses increased productivity, plant manager Dürrfeld reached a momentous agreement with the WVHA: instead of ensuring that the prisoners had enough to live on, the "exhausted" prisoners were to be exchanged for new ones in order to maintain a high level of performance. In doing so, the company became fully complicit in the murder of the Jewish prisoners.

With this type of unscrupulous exploitation of human beings as consumable material, IG Auschwitz became the forerunner for the escalation of the use of prisoners throughout the Reich during the last two years of the war. But not even with this most reprehensible attempt at "economization" did it achieve its goal: contrary to the prevailing research opinion, IG Auschwitz generated a profit from inmate labour.

Despite the ruthless sacrifice of thousands of human lives, the use of prisoners was not profitable. Under the inhumane conditions of the concentration camp, the prisoners could not be used efficiently, as their productivity was only a fraction of that of free workers. Although the IG management denied any knowledge of these connections after the war, the factory management was continuously informed about them through the systematic recording of daily work performance. But why did it then participate in the "extermination through labor" against economic rationale, from which only the SS and the Reich treasury benefited?

A frequently used argument attempts to justify the use of prisoners by claiming that there was no alternative in the armaments industry and that the prisoners were forced upon the economy by the authorities. In the case of IG Auschwitz, this was certainly not the case. The company had demonstrably made every effort to recruit prisoners on its own initiative. Apart from that, the factory was no longer necessarily dependent on them after the first few months. With the exception of brief interruptions due to the war, IG Auschwitz had had a sufficient number of foreign and forced laborers at its disposal since the fall of 1941. This was possible because the company did not rely solely on the state "recruitment" of workers in the occupied territories. In close cooperation with GBChem Krauch, the chemical company also recruited workers in France and Italy, for example, with great promises that were not fulfilled in any way on the ground. These efforts by the IG were so successful that Speer's ministry even suspected at times that the Auschwitz plant had a surplus of workers due to prisoner assignments. Against this background, it seems highly unlikely that the factory could not have been completed without prisoners.

Once investments had been made in the construction of its own concentration camp, the management could not and would not simply end the inefficient use of prisoners. Apart from the initial phase, their absolute contribution to construction progress was comparatively low, despite the sometimes high number of prisoners in Monowitz: even with a high average productivity of 40 percent, the prisoners performed at most around 15 percent of all the work done on the factory premises.

The management of IG Auschwitz and the management board of the company had this knowledge, but did not draw the logical conclusions from it to either end the use of prisoners or to provide better living and working conditions. It must have been difficult for plant manager Dürrfeld to draw such a conclusion. From the very beginning, he had endeavored to expand the use of prisoners and pushed for an extension at every opportunity. Together with Otto Ambros, he had praised the cooperation with the SS so highly that he was unable to concede its economic failure to himself or his employees. In Dürrfeld's eyes, his first major construction project was all too closely linked to the prisoners of KL Auschwitz. The termination of this cooperation between the IG and the SS would also have meant a personal defeat for him,

which he tried to prevent at all costs. The closer the factory complex came to completion, the less economic and rational considerations played a role in his thinking. Dürrfeld had seen the huge investment project in eastern Upper Silesia as his career opportunity from the very beginning, and he was determined to make the most of it. How much suffering and what costs his stubborn pursuit caused was apparently of secondary importance. He did not want to adapt the plans he had made during the successful phase of the Nazi regime to the changing reality. He therefore stuck to his project until the Red Army arrived.

The large-scale use of prisoners in the construction of IG Auschwitz can therefore not be regarded as "proof" that "slave labor can be profitably exploited" even under the conditions of the most modern large-scale capitalist technology - and just as little for the thesis that Auschwitz was basically the "normality [] of a "capitalist leap in development"⁶. On the contrary, in the consistent pursuit of an economic profit motive, more attention should have been paid to the living conditions of the camp inmates. Nevertheless, the hope that the prisoners would be used profitably certainly played a decisive role, especially at the beginning. In a relatively short time, however, Dürrfeld's dominating character developed into the decisive factor in the company's policy. He made all important decisions, in coordination with Ambros, over the heads of his formally equal colleagues Braus and Eisfeld. In particular, Dürrfeld's personal intervention was responsible for the increased discipline, systematic surveillance and the exchange of weakened prisoners for "new" ones, which proved fatal for thousands. Over time, an increasing lack of scrupulousness in dealing with the prisoners can be observed. The example of the mass murder of Jews within sight of the factory premises, the inadequate labor productivity despite all countermeasures and the war situation turning against Germany caused his instructions to become increasingly radical.

Dürrfeld's central role does not, however, absolve the IG board of its responsibility. However, this did not lie in the deliberate support of Hitler's rearmament plans and the crimes of the SS, as the prosecution in Nuremberg tried to prove. Both were in contradiction to the central goals of the export-oriented company. On the other hand, the Board of Management can be held liable, on a general level, for the fundamental decision to cooperate with Hitler. On this point, however, it is questionable whether - apart from the complete abandonment of the Group's independence - an alternative course of action actually existed. In any case, the IG management had laid the foundations for involvement in the crimes of the SS. The Executive Board had a decisive influence on the development of the Auschwitz plant by selecting the employees responsible for planning and construction. In contrast to company tradition, the company opted for people whose views showed a strong affinity with Nazi ideology. Because Ambros and Dürrfeld were allowed to continue despite their detailed knowledge of the conditions there, the Management Board was also fully responsible for their actions.

⁶ Roth, I.G. Auschwitz, p. 27.

responsibility for the deadly perversion of labor at the Auschwitz Buna plant. The top management, which was actually only interested in economic advantages, soon no longer dared to terminate the unproductive cooperation with the SS - in their estimation, the possible political disadvantages obviously outweighed the current economic losses.

The importance of individual personalities for the development of events in Auschwitz/Monowitz also applies to internal camp procedures. In Monowitz, the SS had withdrawn from the day-to-day running of the camp to a greater extent than in other camps and had effectively ceded executive powers to the prisoners' self-administration. Without the help of the mostly German and Polish, and only rarely Jewish, prisoners, Monowitz would not have functioned so smoothly as a labor pool. By deliberately selecting the initial prisoner workforce, the SS had succeeded in enforcing its racial and national hierarchy within the camp. Apart from a few exceptions, the enforced and sometimes hasty obedience of the "prisoner celebrities" led to the almost exclusive murder of Jewish prisoners. It was only on this basis that the two important prisoner organizations, one communist and the other national Polish, were able to successfully ensure the survival of their members. Although generally powerless against the camp rules imposed by the SS, some prisoner functionaries crossed the line from required cooperation to opportunistic collaboration with the SS.

In addition to the systematic terror of the SS guards and the inhuman indifference of many IG employees, the prisoner functionaries thus also bore the brunt.

- within the framework granted to them by the SS - contributed significantly to the situation in the camp. More than previously assumed, individual prisoner functionaries in Monowitz shaped the daily lives of the camp inmates (in a positive or negative way). An in-depth investigation into the sensitive topic of the involvement of prisoners in the crimes of the SS, even beyond the Monowitz camp, therefore seems urgently needed. The full perfidy of the National Socialist system of oppression and murder can only be grasped when the resulting deformations in the social behavior of the prisoners are also brought into focus. -

Among other things, this study attempted to show how fluid the boundaries between victim and perpetrator became in the Auschwitz camps. Even concentration camp prisoners, who themselves suffered the most under the persecution pressure of the regime, were more or less forced to participate in the crimes of the SS in this environment. In contrast to most prisoner functionaries, the industrial managers working in Auschwitz had far greater freedom of decision. Even allowing for the violence of the Hitler regime against any opposition, they therefore bore at least moral liability for aiding and abetting the murder of Jewish prisoners. However, making the company as a whole responsible for the events in Monowitz on the basis of the negligence of individual persons - or even the entire board of IG - does not do justice to the historical situation. Those who look for the cause in the capitalist economic system even one level above that,

simplifies the historical problem of the "work" in the Nazi concentration camps that destroyed human life.

As easy as it would be to place the "blame" for the Nazi crimes on a comparatively limited group of big capitalists, this view is an obstacle to clarifying what actually happened. The management of IG Auschwitz did nothing other than exploit the opportunities given to them by the regime - as did many other Germans during the war years. On the eastern edge of the Reich and in the immediate vicinity of the Auschwitz concentration camp extermination sites, these boundaries were very wide. The ethical standards of human behavior, which were usually buried behind ideological phrases during the Nazi era, had completely lost their validity here. It makes no sense to demand a higher level of ethical responsibility from a profit-oriented corporation than from society as a whole. Under comparable circumstances, capitalist companies will therefore be just as susceptible to the abuse of freedom as any individual in the future. This paper has attempted to show where the lack of a clear ethical framework sanctioned by state and social institutions can lead.

VI Post-history: Winding up and coming to terms with IG Auschwitz

After the evacuation and withdrawal of the German occupying forces from eastern Upper Silesia, the "war-decisive" armaments complex became what was probably the most expensive investment ruin of the "Third Reich". Nevertheless, this did not mean the end of IG Auschwitz: an industrial project of these dimensions, on which up to 30,000 people had worked simultaneously - and which had also cost the lives of around 30,000 prisoners - did not simply cease to exist. Not only the buildings and facilities of the factory, but also the financial and human costs of its construction had an aftermath that extended far beyond the end of the war. The following account is therefore primarily concerned with the consequences of the company's close involvement in the murder of concentration camp prisoners.

The factory premises

On January 27, 1945, the Red Army occupied the IG site and liberated the Auschwitz and Monowitz concentration camps. The company thus lost a major chemical plant in which more than 600 million RM had been invested since the spring of 1941. In order not to simply hand over the state-of-the-art plant complex to the enemy, which was almost ready for production despite the bomb damage, the management had the plants "paralyzed" in January 1945. To this end, the IG engineers had presumably removed central control and connection elements. Operating materials and supplies of all kinds had been distributed to almost 30 warehouses in Upper Silesia since the fall of 1944. Nevertheless, the factory represented an enormous economic asset when the Soviet army arrived. A subsequent audit, which was only completed in 1950, estimated the value of "the Auschwitz plant including all ancillary facilities" at this time at around 800 to 900 million RM, "which, with the exception of a few relocated assets, were to be regarded as lost".¹

The abandonment of the huge factory complex was associated with the long-delayed and finally hasty evacuation at the end of January 1944. Instead, the former administrative staff of IG Auschwitz were faced with the - in view of the progressive collapse of the German Reich almost insoluble - problem of properly concluding all existing obligations: at least the German workers had to be formally transferred to other IG plants, agreed deliveries of goods had to be canceled and outstanding payments had to be made. To this end, the former management of IG Auschwitz, with the support of Otto Ambros, set up separate settlement offices for the two divisions that had been active there. The *S [ynthese]* working group, which initially met in Heidenau, Saxony, and from April 1945 in the Hitler Youth Home in Königsstein, Saxony, was responsible for managing the affairs of the fuel plant². With

¹ BASF Corporate Archives, IG AG - A 25 1 /6, Report of the sworn auditor Karl A. Riegner on the audit of the status of the Auschwitz plant as of July 5, 1 945 and June 20, 1 948, written on July 5, 1950, p. 2.

² On this and the following: BASF Corporate Archives, IG AG - A 25 1/5-26, "Auschwitz liquidation", 2nd liquidation meeting, March 23, 1945.

An office in Heidelberg was initially responsible for handling the Buna part of the business before it moved to Ampfing in Upper Bavaria (Mühldorf district)³. In addition to the inconspicuous rural surroundings, the reason for the relocation was presumably the proximity of the IG subsidiary Anorgana in Gendorf near Burgkirchen/Alz, where IG board member Otto Ambros was working at the end of the war.

The confusing situation in the last months of the war and the first post-war months led to the establishment of another liquidation office in Mosbach/Baden in the fall of 1945, which was again closer to Heidelberg⁴. The accounting documents received were compiled there and an attempt was made to create a financial overview of the assets left behind. It proved to be a considerable obstacle that large parts of the bank records were also lost or at least could not be found at first. The district savings bank responsible for the Auschwitz plant in Bielitz in eastern Upper Silesia, which had meanwhile been relocated to Wunsiedel in the Fichtelgebirge, was hardly able to help⁵. The completion of the report thus dragged on until 1950.

The plant left behind found a new use in a much shorter time. After the withdrawal of the Wehrmacht units, Eastern Upper Silesia, which had been annexed by the German Reich in 1939, initially fell under the control of the Soviet occupying forces. Before Poland, which had been moved geographically to the west under pressure from the USSR, regained a certain degree of state sovereignty, the majority of the valuable equipment of the huge chemical combine, which was somehow to be dismantled, had already been taken to the Soviet Union. For example, the high-pressure synthesis plants of IG Auschwitz were transported to western Siberia in this way. In Kemerovo, they formed the basis for the construction of a combine for the hydrogenation of coal⁶.

Many Germans from all over Upper Silesia also took part in the dismantling work for use⁷. The Soviet military administration housed them in the various open camps around the factory site. Locked behind barbed wire, with hard physical labor and poor rations, Germans now experienced what forced labor meant. According to the little information available, it appears that people died every day on the IG Auschwitz site during this phase, mainly due to inadequate safety precautions. As in other regions "liberated" by the Red Army, here too many German and ethnic German women became victims of rape. However, the Upper Silesians allegedly suffered even more from the fact that "the Russians were so much in control of us"⁸. Similarly, the Polish population in the area

³ The liquidation office in Ampfing appears to have been in operation as early as the beginning of April 1945, as IG employee Savelsberg made a memo on letterhead to this effect. BASF - Corporate Archives, IG AG - A 251 /5-26, "Auschwitz liquidation", Savelsberg memo, April 10, 1945.

⁴ BASF Corporate Archives, IG AG-A 25 1/5-5, Settlement Office A, Heidelberg to Settlement Office Az (Auschwitz), 15. 10.1945.

⁵ BASF company archives, IG AG-A 25 1/5-4, settlement office Az to Kreissparkasse Bielitz/Wunsiedel, 1.2. 1946.

⁶ Cf. Birkenfeld, Treibstoff, p. 214 f.

⁷ Cf. on this and the following Kaps, Tragödie. p. 158 ff.

⁸ Kaps, Tragedy. S. 160.

The German occupying forces gave free rein to their years of pent-up feelings of revenge against the German occupying regime and in many cases also affected uninvolved civilians.

The machine parts that remained in Auschwitz formed the basis for one of the largest plastics production facilities in Poland. The huge dimensions of the factory site and its tall chimneys still dominate the horizon on the highway drive from Krakow to Katowice. The former IG plant developed into by far the largest employer and brought about a considerable industrial upswing in the region around Auschwitz. In 1995, the town of Oswiecim celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the factory with major festivities. On its western side, near the main entrance to the factory, there is a memorial to the victims of forced labor between 1941 and 1945.

Only a few barracks and the remains of brick chimneys remain from the Monowitz concentration camp itself. According to the latest information, the largely dilapidated buildings on private land were to be demolished. The "readiness settlement" built by the IG for its employees to the east of the old town, on the other hand, exists almost unchanged and still represents a significant proportion of the living space in Auschwitz today.

Although the material relics of IG Farben's involvement in eastern Upper Silesia were seamlessly transferred to the respective new masters, the history of IG Auschwitz was not yet over in 1945. In the course of the Nuremberg Succession Trial against the leading managers of IG Farbenindustrie AG, the events in Auschwitz were to play a decisive role. First, however, more general questions were at the center of the investigations by the victorious powers.

The investigations and the trial against IG

Since the Casablanca Conference in January 1943, the Allies had made the unconditional surrender of the German Reich their main war aim. Their policy was guided by the desire to finally deprive Germany of the opportunity to wage another war of aggression after two world wars. As the initiative had clearly come from the leadership of the German Reich in 1939, the Allied states sought, for various reasons, to hold all those who had played a decisive role responsible. In October 1943, their foreign ministers therefore agreed in Moscow to bring German war criminals before a court. However, this definition was not only to include the "classic" war crimes that had occurred in connection with combat operations or against the civilian population. Rather, for the first time, the deliberate start and preparation of a war of aggression, which was to cost around 55 million lives by the time it ended, was also considered a crime.

Such an undertaking, as ethically justified as it may seem to us from a distance of over 50 years, encountered major obstacles in the immediate post-war period. The legal foundations on which such a process was to be conducted,

first had to be formulated in detail⁹. This was all the more the case since, according to the Allied definition, the circle of those to be accused included not only the responsible politicians and military officers, but also those industrial managers who had made Germany's rearmament possible in the first place with their companies. The great importance of IG Farbenindustrie AG, particularly for the autarky policy of the Reich, had of course not gone unnoticed by the Allies during the war. The enormous economic power of large corporations such as Krupp and IG Farben in particular probably fuelled the conviction that long-term peace for Germany was only possible by destroying industry and subsequently agrarianizing the country.

Although US President Roosevelt ultimately refused to sign the Morgenthau Plan, investigations into the chemical company began even before the end of hostilities in Europe.¹⁰ Due to the complicated involvement of American companies in IG's business, three different American agencies dealt with the case during the course of 1945.

Subject: a team from the Foreign Economic Administration, the Office of Strategy Services and a team of army investigators¹¹. Their work created the basis for the proceedings, which were initially planned as an international tribunal. In the Potsdam

Agreement of June 1945, the Four Powers agreed on the basic principles for the punishment of war criminals. In the negotiations that followed, the initial plan was to prosecute an entrepreneur on behalf of the German arms industry in the opening trial against the main war criminals¹². However, the trial against the industrial magnate Gustav Krupp von Bohlen und Haibach, who had been chosen, failed due to his failing health.

In spring 1946, after the end of the International Military Tribunal against the major war criminals (**IMT**), preparations began again for a trial against a small number of German industrialists who had been particularly exposed during the "Third Reich". However, after the prosecutors' experiences during the first trial, which had been severely hampered by the need for coordination between the four nations, it was soon agreed to leave trials against industrialists to the individual occupying powers. At the end of 1946

⁹ The provisions of the Hague Regulations (1907) and the Geneva Conventions (1929) are inevitably general in this respect. For practical legal application, they therefore required specification and the exact definition of criminal offenses.

¹⁰ According to Sasuly, IG Farben, p. 30, the investigations began "almost immediately after the occupation of Frankfurt am Main".

¹¹ Dubois, *Generals*, p. 39 f. The following account of the preparation and conduct of the IG trial frequently draws on the information in Dubois, *Generals*. Although he did not hold an impartial position as an employee of the prosecuting authority, the data found there proved to be extremely reliable when checked by other sources. His interpretation of the decision-making situation of the American court and the political background also appears to be quite balanced; see Jung, *Rechtsprobleme*, p. 210 ff.; Greiner, IG-Joe, *passim*.

¹² Cf. on the following Borkin, *I.G. Farben*, p. 125 ff.

the Americans' plans finally matured to such an extent¹³ that they began the concrete preparation of three proceedings against industrial companies¹⁴.

The legal basis for these Nuremberg follow-up trials against war criminals in the arms industry had been laid by Control Council Law No. 10 of 20 . December 1945¹⁵. It regulated the "punishment of persons guilty of war crimes, crimes against peace or crimes against humanity". The "constitution and jurisdiction" of the American military court derived from this was laid down in Order No. 7 of the Military Administration for the American occupation zone dated February 17, 1947. In the proceedings against IG, the prosecution focused on the members of the Board of Management, the Chairman of the Supervisory Board and a few plant directors. In their work, however, the prosecutors could not count on the unanimous support of all the American authorities. Even the American military governor in Germany, Lucius D. Clay, was somewhat skeptical about the follow-up trials¹⁶.

Almost two years after the German capitulation, the persecution of German industrialists was no longer a priority for the majority of political forces in America. Particularly within the economic bureaucracy, the action taken against large German industrial corporations, which in the eyes of many observers had "only" supported the war efforts of their government - just as American or British companies had done for their countries - had already been viewed with great concern. And even politicians concerned with defense issues were not comfortable with the thought of what conclusions American entrepreneurs would draw from a possible condemnation of arms companies for their behavior in the future. In addition, the entire American policy was increasingly determined by the growing conflict of interests with the Soviet Union. The constant disputes, especially over the reorganization of Europe, led many American politicians to believe that the USSR was becoming the real new enemy of the Western democracies. In such a situation, broad circles in the USA considered a lawsuit against German industrialists, whose support might soon be needed to secure Western Europe, to be of little help.

However, the prosecution, led by Brigadier General Telford Taylor, was initially not overly influenced by the confused situation in Washington. Taylor entrusted an experienced specialist, Josiah E. Dubois, with the preparation of the indictment in Case VI. As an employee of the Treasury Department, he had dealt with the freezing of IG's foreign assets during and after the war and therefore knew the Group very well¹⁷. From December 1946 to

¹³ Cf. Dubois, *Generals*, p. 8 ff.

¹⁴ In 1947 and 1948, trials were held against executives of the Flick Group (Case V), IG Farbenindustrie AG (Case VI) and the Krupp Group (Case X).

¹⁵ Text of Control Council Law No. 10 in Jung, *Rechtsprobleme*, pp. 226-23 1; *ibid.* pp. 232-239 Text of Ordinance No. 7.

¹⁶ Cf. on this and the following Dubois, *Generals*, p. 30 f.

¹⁷ Cf. Dubois, *Generals*, p. 15 .

From May 1, 1947, the twelve lawyers of the IG Trial Team worked almost incessantly on the formulation of the indictment. Together with almost ten other members of staff, they faced the almost impossible task of proving the individual responsibility of 24 defendants from the available documents. Although the IG Executive Board had ordered the comprehensive destruction of important IG documents in the final weeks of the war¹⁸, displaced persons¹⁹ housed in the Frankfurt headquarters had used the piles of files there as heating material in the fall of 1945 and army personnel had simply thrown their contents out of the windows for lack of files, the investigators did not suffer from a lack of usable material²⁰. The various investigation teams had collected large amounts of evidence, which they first had to organize. In addition, at least the central documents had to be translated into English before they could be used in the trial.

The indictment was initially strongly based on the guidelines from the 1945 Allied Control Council agreements²¹. Dubois and his colleagues formulated their five points of accusation in accordance with the four categories laid down there: The definition of "crimes against peace" adopted by the Control Council therefore appeared almost verbatim in the first and fifth counts, which dealt with the preparation and execution as well as the joint planning of a war of aggression. "Plunder and Spoliation" (count 2) referred to the "classic war crimes" of plundering public or private property. Membership in an organization classified as criminal by the IMT, the subject of count four, primarily concerned IG managers who had belonged to the SS. Finally, participation in enslavement and mass murder (count 3) fulfilled the Four Powers' definition of "crimes against humanity". This last count, which proved decisive for a conviction in the course of the trial, primarily concerned the events during the construction of IG Auschwitz. The 24 accused IG managers were each accused of all the offenses listed in the indictment - with the exception of membership of the SS.

The defendants

Most of the members of the IG's board of directors had become involved during the last months of the war, when the communication links within the ramified con-

¹⁸ This was partly due to information from German intelligence services about the imminent seizure of Finnen documents by field teams on behalf of the US Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau; see Greiner, IG-Joe, especially p. 9.

¹⁹ Displaced persons (DPs) are people of non-German nationality who were deported from their homeland by German or allied troops during the Second World War and were still in the former German Reich territory at the end of the war. Before repatriation began, the number of DPs in the occupation zones amounted to around 8.5 million.

²⁰ Cf. Sasuly, IG Farben, p. 30 f.; Dubois, Generals, p. 37 f.

²¹ For the following see Jung, Rechtsprobleme, p. 226 ff., Control Council, Law No. 1 O. NMT, Vol. 7, S. 10 ff.

The company, which was increasingly dissolved by the events of the war, withdrew to its home territory in the west of the German Reich. In the course of the initial investigations, the American investigators took the majority of the board members into custody. However, Otto Ambros initially escaped arrest. In May 1945, he witnessed the occupation by American troops in an underground plant for dyes and cleaning agents belonging to IG subsidiary Anorgana in Gendorf, Bavaria. The commander was suspicious of the remarkably well-dressed man in this environment, but after brief questioning he let him go due to a lack of further information about his person. With his friendly, open manner and generous distribution of soap, he allegedly even won the sympathy of the soldiers, so that he remained unmolested in Gendorf for a few more months.

When the investigators realized who Ambros was, they no longer had direct access to him, as he had returned to his former place of work in Ludwigshafen at the end of 1944 to help rebuild the IG plant there. Despite temporary imprisonment, Ambros probably worked there to the satisfaction of the French occupation authorities. In any case, they did not want to put him in the hands of the American prosecution, who saw him as one of the main defendants. It was only days before the start of the trial that a personal intervention by Taylor succeeded in having Ambros expelled from the French zone²².

The plant manager of IG Auschwitz, Walther Dürrfeld, was in charge of the He drove the evacuation of the factory to an IG factory in Pirna, Saxony, where around 1000 of his German employees had already been evacuated²³. He had organized this transport in consultation with the Reichsverteidigungskommissar in order to preserve the workforce under the jurisdiction of GBChem²⁴. In May 1945, Dürrfeld fled again from the Red Army in Saxony to the IG's home territory, where he was taken into American custody at the beginning of November 1945²⁵. Fritz ter Meer and Heinrich Bütefisch, besides Ambros the other two board members involved with IG Auschwitz, had already been in Allied custody since May and June 1945 respectively, as had the chairman of the board, Hermann Schmitz. The other defendants, on the other hand, mostly spent only shorter periods in the prisons of the occupying powers.

Fritz ter Meer, who as Chairman of the Technical Committee of the IG (TEA) had played a decisive role on the IG Executive Board for years, was also responsible for safeguarding the "interests of the Executive Board" during the preparations for the process. After the first round of their intensive questioning was completed at the end of 1945, the board members often spent long periods together.

²² Cf. Dubois, *Generals*, p. 32 f., p. 69 f.

²³ This conclusion is obvious, since Dürrfeld's detailed report on the last months of IG Auschwitz was written in Pirna at the beginning of February 1945. In neighboring Heidenau, he presumably set up one of the Auschwitz plant's processing offices together with former colleagues.

²⁴ Nümbg. doc. NI-11 956, Dürrfeld report, February 7, 1945, p. 7.

²⁵ NMT, vol. 8, p. 805, p. 1 208.

together in a prison wing²⁶. Under the leadership of ter Meer, they used this time to work out a joint defense strategy. For a certain period of time", meetings were held "approximately every morning among the leading gentlemen of I.G. Farben in Cransberg". The subject of these meetings was "I.G. Farben and the policy of the Allies and the Americans with regard to I.G. Farben and the leading gentlemen of I.G. Farben", as ter Meer put it in complicated terms²⁷.

In the course of these discussions, he seems to have informed those colleagues who The example of Georg von Schnitzler and Hermann Schmitz makes it clear that they had put strong pressure on those who had made dissenting statements. During the initial period of their imprisonment, both had issued a whole series of statements confirming the IG's extensive and conscious knowledge of and active participation in Hitler's rearmament program. With the support of his "technical" colleagues, Ter Meer succeeded in unsettling von Schnitzler in particular, a "businessman" whom they held in low esteem, to such an extent that he officially withdrew his statements. In their place, Meer wrote a jointly compiled text about the events. Even Schnitzler's official statement, which preceded the agreed version, still echoes the peer pressure exerted on him: "This correction has been drafted after several weeks of detailed discussions, in which I also took part, between the members of the Executive Board present here, especially the technical ones.

It was only this extensive joint work that gave me, as a non-technician and merchant, a clear picture of the complicated and multifaceted interrelationships between the two.

the events recorded in the memorandum ter Meer. "28 -

TEA chairman ter Meer had thus succeeded in persuading von Schnitzler to publicly declare that, despite decades of senior involvement in the IG, he had basically no idea of what was actually going on. This seems all the more remarkable as von Schnitzler's statements did not so much concern technical details as general matters of corporate policy. Investigations by the prosecution also revealed that von Schnitzler had been pushed to the brink of a nervous breakdown during the periods he spent with Meer in prison. In this situation, von Schnitzler was prepared to sign whatever ter Meer put in front of him. After a period of reflection and the assurance that he would no longer be placed in a prison together with ter Meer, von Schnitzler confirmed shortly before the start of the trial that he would no longer be in prison.

original presentation, apart from minor changes, in its entirety 9²

The careful "coordination" of the statements led by ter Meer served above all to prevent a conviction under count three of the indictment. The strategy amounted to taking the initiative for the use of

²⁶ Nuremberg Doc. NI-14116, statement by Knieriem, 11.12. 1946, p. 2 f. ; cf. Dubois, Generals, p. 46 f.

²⁷ Nuremberg Doc. NI-5 187, testimony of ter Meer, April 18, 1947, p. 2.

²⁸ Nuremberg Doc. NI-5 187, testimony ter Meer, April 18, 1947, p. 19.

²⁹ Nuremberg Doc. NI-5 196, statement by Schnitzler, March 18, 1947; excerpts also in NMT, vol. 7, p. 1503 ff.

concentration camp prisoners to the Reich authorities. Ter Meer apparently hoped to minimize the responsibility for the inhumane working conditions by denying that the IG committees were aware of the existence of KL Auschwitz at the time of the location decision. Otto Ambros therefore testified before the Nuremberg judges that he had been informed of the intended use of

KL prisoners as workers for the first time in a letter dated March 4, 1941 from the office of Carl Krauch, General Plenipotentiary for Special Issues in Chemical Production (GBChem)³⁰. So although, as explained in detail above, the subject of prisoner labor had already been discussed in internal IG meetings in December 1940 and, with regard to Auschwitz, from mid-January 1941 at the latest, Ambros now denied such early knowledge. In order to support this account, which contradicted the contemporary documents, the IG managers attempted to construct a suitable file situation. Their tactic was to give the judges the impression that certain information about the Auschwitz site was not available at the time of the agreement with Krauch. They were aided by the fact that no document existed which explicitly and unambiguously named the date of the site decision.

The defense therefore claimed during the trial that the decision for the Auschwitz site had not been made between Krauch, Ambros and Ter Meer on February 6, 1941, but had already been made at a conference of the Commercial Committee on February 1, 1941.

January 30. This alleged decision was to be based on the content of the file not of a telephone conversation between IG engineers Santo and Faust on January 25, 1941³¹. This reasoning seems astonishing because Faust's written report, dated the same day, is much more detailed and concerns several aspects of the location. However, the fact that the short memo deals almost exclusively with the water conditions may have determined the defense's argumentation. It was obviously trying to create the impression that no knowledge of the concentration camp located in the south of the city or of the water conditions, despite the fact that they were not known, had been taken into account in the decision.

Resettlement of Poles and Jews from Auschwitz available as labor³² 2_

It seems almost impossible that a decision of such significance was made on the basis of an inadequate memorandum - for it cannot reasonably be assumed that the IG committees would have been convinced by the water conditions alone. The unanimous ignorance of Faust's written report rather points to a collusion with the aim of thwarting a conviction under point three of the indictment. In their affidavits, engineers Alt and Santo confirmed the existence of the memorandum about the telephone conversation, but, like the author of the report, Faust, concealed the memorandum of January 25, 1941. As it turned out in the course of the trial_____

³⁰ NMT, vol. 8, p. 739, referring to Nuremberg Doc. NI- 1 1086, Krauch to IG, March 4, 1941.

³¹ Nuremberg Doc. Case VI, Ambros Exhibit 77.

³² On this and the following quotations: Nuremberg Doc. Case VI, B 12 1, Final Brief of the Prosecution Part IV, S. 13 ff.

that this document was "constantly in the hands of the defense", the conclusion that this was the result of an agreed defense strategy is almost inevitable. The cross-examination of the witness Alt also revealed that the assertion that this telephone memo was the only basis for the decision, which was considered unlikely anyway, was incorrect: "Certainly

Other documents as well. Otherwise Dr. Ambras would not have been able to make so many suggestions to the K Committee about the procurement of coke and lime from various places."³³ Alt also admitted the "possibility" that Ambras, Eisfeld and Mach had also "heard something about the Auschwitz concentration camp in the past". Ter Meer's carefully crafted version undoubtedly lost some of its persuasive power as a result.

The judgments

The court was clearly not impressed by the defendants' arguments. Although it recognized that the initiative to build a fourth Buna plant had not come from IG, it did not regard the selection of the Auschwitz site as a coercive measure by the Reich. Rather, this location had only been found suitable by the IG after a detailed analysis of the location factors, "including the availability of concentration-camp labor"³⁴. Apart from this, the judges considered the very fact of employing forced laborers, prisoners of war and concentration camp inmates to be a "war crime". In particular, the conditions under which the prisoners were deployed in Auschwitz precluded the recognition of a war crime.

"Befehlsnotstand" due to the "slave-labor program". Furthermore, they considered it proven that the inmate workers "were not forced upon Farben"³⁵. Rather, the management in Auschwitz had taken action against the resistance of the camp SS in order to actually obtain the workers urgently needed for construction. Although the entire management board and the members of the Technical Committee had precise knowledge of the use of prisoners and the problems associated with it, this was not enough for the court to convict all the defendants on count three. In addition to the Auschwitz plant manager Dürrfeld and the responsible members of the board Ambras and Bütetisch, it only held the chairman of the TEA ter Meer and the GBChem Krauch responsible. It acquitted the other defendants of this charge. However, eight of them were found guilty on count two of plundering foreign property, including ter Meer, who was the only defendant to be convicted on two counts.

While the political situation in Europe had already cast its shadow over Nuremberg during the preparations for the trial, the situation had become even more acute by the day of the verdict: "On the day of judgment, war was on everybody's lips"³⁶, as one of the participants recalled. The airlift of the

³³ Ibid.; Nümbg. doc. Case VI, Protocol, p. 13247-69, here p. 1 3254.

³⁴ See the reasons for the judgment in: NMT, Vol. 8, p. 1 187.

³⁵ On this and the following: NMT, Vol. 8, p. 1 1 92 ff.

³⁶ Dubois, Generals, p. 338.

At this point, the Western Allies had already been supplying Berlin with all essential goods for more than a month. The members of the prosecuting authority indicated that the Cold War, which was already approaching one of its climaxes, had not remained without influence on the court³⁷. Under these circumstances, only lenient sentences were to be expected in the proceedings against leading business personalities in a country whose economic power was relied upon by the American occupying power.

On July 30, 1948, the American Military Tribunal VI consequently sentenced ten of the Defendants acquitted of all charges³⁸. Eight IG managers were sentenced to prison terms of between one and a half and five years after indictment point two³⁹. Because of their responsibility for the use of concentration camp prisoners, the judges imposed sentences of between six and eight years, the latter for Otto Ambros and Walther Dürrfeld. As the period of pre-trial detention was taken into account, two convicts were able to leave the court as free men. Five other IG managers, Schmitz, Oster, Bürgin, Häfliger and Jähne, only had to serve sentences of less than a year. Only the four defendants who were largely responsible for the events at the Auschwitz plant and the Monowitz camp were sent to prison for a longer period: Dürrfeld, Ambros, ter Meer and Krauch.

Legal problems of the IG process

Since the beginning of the Allied investigations against leading IG managers, they had doubted the legality of such criminal proceedings. The main arguments of the defense were, as in the other Nuremberg trials, the principle of "nulla poena sine lege" and the accusation of "tu quoque", i.e. the (alleged and actual) non-punishment of war crimes on the Allied side. In public, people spoke more pointedly of "victor's justice". In fact, the legal

The legal basis for such a procedure has not yet been fully clarified among lawyers⁴⁰. However, the legal literature is now predominantly of the opinion that the decisive factors for the conviction in the IG process are

"war crimes and crimes against humanity" were unlawful even without the existence of explicit criminal offenses⁴¹. A detailed discussion of this debate, which was mostly nourished by the contrasts between natural law and positivist conceptions of law, is neither possible nor necessary at this point⁴². On the other hand

³⁷ Greiner's thesis, IG-Joe, p. 11 ff., that the change in American policy towards defeated Germany (and its industrial elite) since the end of the war was largely due to the development of the atomic bomb seems - to use Greiner's words - "very speculative" indeed.

³⁸ NMT, Vol. 8, p. 1206 ff.

³⁹ Fritz ter Meer was sentenced to a total of seven years' imprisonment, although the greater part of this was probably attributable to count three.

⁴⁰ The problematic nature of international criminal proceedings is currently being demonstrated once again in the proceedings against Serbian war criminals before The Hague Tribunal.

⁴¹ Cf. Jung, Rechtsprobleme, p. 165.

⁴² For an overview of the legal literature on the Nuremberg Trials, see Jung, Rechtsprobleme, S. 1-6.

The sentences passed in Nuremberg are compared with the historical responsibility of the accused IG managers with the time distance of 50 years. A brief summary of the extent to which these men were involved in the crimes at Auschwitz seems appropriate.

The evaluation of the extensive sources on the history of IG Auschwitz in this work has clearly demonstrated the (joint) responsibility of the responsible IG managers for the events on the factory premises and in the Monowitz camp. The Auschwitz site had already been selected with the full knowledge of the IG management in the expectation of having supposedly cheap prisoner labor available there. From the very beginning, the initiative to employ concentration camp prisoners came from the IG. At no time did the SS or other Reich authorities exert any pressure on the company to use prisoners; rather, the labor deployment authorities were confronted with steadily increasing demands from the IG. The construction management only assigned prisoners to the hardest jobs, which they often had to carry out at walking pace and always in completely inadequate work clothing and without the appropriate tools. The management did nothing about the miserable living conditions in the barracks, which had been largely caused by the management since the completion of the Monowitz camp at the end of 1942 at the latest, despite being informed in detail by the company's management committees.

On the contrary, by insisting on a low and fixed sickness rate, the factory management created a situation in which prisoners who were "no longer fit for work" were selected, taken to the gas chambers in Birkenau and replaced by new ones. This procedure for maintaining high labor productivity, which cost around 30,000 lives, was not only the talk of the day on the construction site and in the town of Auschwitz, but was even deliberately used by the IG-Meißner to extract every last ounce of work performance from those who were already completely exhausted. The management's knowledge of these events can therefore not be seriously denied, especially as it is proven by contemporary documents and witness reports. Through their attitude, the leading employees of IG Auschwitz, and Walther Dürrfeld in particular, contributed directly to the implementation of the racially ideologically motivated extermination of the Jewish inmates of Monowitz.

In addition, the management of IG Auschwitz was well aware that the treatment of the forced laborers and prisoners was unjust: this is the only way to understand why the inhumane treatment of forced laborers and prisoners was repeatedly described in factory appeals.

The use of prisoners was justified by the fact that they were "the lowest kind of perpetrators and that every means was justified to force the prisoners to work"⁴³. Even though Dürrfeld and his colleagues generally tried to overlook these obvious consequences of the prisoner deployment they had initiated, they could not completely free themselves from their awareness of injustice.

⁴³ This is how the members of the management in Auschwitz are said to have expressed themselves. Nümbg. doc. NI-9808, statement by Posener, June 3, 1947, p. 7.

In view of the extent of the suffering and death inflicted on the prisoners of the Monowitz camp by the management of IG Auschwitz, the legal prosecution of these actions can hardly be dismissed as mere victor's justice. With increasing distance from the events of the war and the emergence of a generation that was unencumbered by them, if only because of its age, the purely positivist view of the law that had prevailed in Germany until then increasingly lost its power of persuasion. More and more people gained the impression that impunity for participating in the murder of thousands of people would profoundly call into question the rules of coexistence in civilized societies. Even in the absence of a formal

Because of the monstrosity of the crime, they felt it necessary to set aside individual claims in such a case⁴⁴.

Leaving the formal legal problems to one side, from today's perspective it can be clearly stated that all defendants in the Nuremberg trials were granted a fair trial. Incidentally, this is not limited to the admission of freely chosen defense counsel, but also applies on a fundamental level. The trial of war crimes before a court of law certainly put the handling of excesses in the course of conflicts between states on a new footing. Despite the seriousness of the accusations in many cases, the aim was not only to satisfy the victor's sense of justice through summary executions, but also to prove the individual responsibility of the accused.

The seriousness of this Allied request is evident from the length of the proceedings in each case. In the IG trial, for example, the court was in session for 152 days.

The trial lasted almost 15 months from the presentation of the indictment to the pronouncement of the verdict⁴⁵. The account circulated by the IG and people close to it that there had been an "inequality of arms between the indictment of the victorious powers and the one limited to the most modest possibilities".

Defense in the Defeated and Occupied Country"⁴⁶, the actual conditions were quite the opposite. While the prosecution had twelve lawyers and a few translators and assistants at its disposal, a total of 87 lawyers and the corresponding number of helpful IG staff took care of the defense.

ters for the defense of the accused⁴⁷. Each defense lawyer received per month around 3500 RM salary, to which "other little things" such as American cigarettes came⁴⁸. Even the fact that the proceedings complied with the rules of American and not German procedure could not call into question the rule of law.

⁴⁴ In the opinion of the presiding judge in the Frankfurt Auschwitz trial, Hans Hofmeyer, this argument lacked any force anyway. In his opinion, the actions of the accused SS guards also constituted injustice during the Nazi era, which had nevertheless not been prosecuted by the authorities; see Werle/Wandres, *Auschwitz*, p. 89 f.

⁴⁵ List of the chronological sequence in: NMT, vol. 7, p. 3.

⁴⁶ Reichelt, *Erbe*, p. 49.

⁴⁷ NMT, vol. 7, p. 7 ff.; cf. Dubois, *Generals*, p. 34.

⁴⁸ *Der Spiegel*, 21 / 1 949, May 19, 1 949, p. 7 ff.

In reality, the German criticism was not so much aimed at the legality of the proceedings, although this was the impression most of the public wanted to create. Rather, the IG lawyers' approach was an attempt to divert attention from the individual responsibility of individuals by stylizing the trial as a fundamental dispute between victorious Americans on the one side and defeated Germans on the other. This strategy proved so successful that it could also serve as a template for the defendants' individual "coming to terms with the past". The former chief lawyer of the IG, August von Knieriem, who was acquitted in Nuremberg, dedicated his book "Nuremberg", published in 1953, exclusively to the attempt to cast doubt on the foundations of the trial. On more than 500 pages, he discussed the formal legal problems of the Nuremberg follow-up trials in detail, only to end up describing them as "political trials", whose real aim he believed to be the mere pursuit of sensationalism⁴⁹. In strange contrast to this meticulous and tail-obsessed account, Knieriem's extremely terse remark that an "examination and assessment" of the accusations made under count three was impossible for him due to the "incalculable amount of evidence presented by the prosecution and defense"⁵⁰. The result of such an examination of the "improper treatment of forced laborers and prisoners of war on the part of the industrial companies in question"

- Concentration camp prisoners are not even mentioned, he nevertheless informed his readers: "Basically, it should only be noted that when examining the living conditions of these foreigners, especially with regard to wages, food and exposure to air raids, it must be borne in mind that these foreigners had to share unavoidable and unavoidable hardships with the German civilian population." Only a few years after the end of the war, Knieriem tried to claim in all seriousness that there were no differences in the living conditions of forced laborers and Germans.

The large number of contemporary documents and statements by former inmates and employees of IG Auschwitz collected by the prosecution, the authenticity of which can be proven by many other sources, makes it possible to draw a differentiated picture of the events on the premises of IG Auschwitz. After the renewed evaluation, it can be stated that, apart from details, it supports the statements of the prosecution with regard to the Auschwitz plant. The initiative of Ambros, ter Meer, Bütelfisch and Dürrfeld to obtain inmate labor in ever greater numbers - and in part against massive resistance from the camp SS and the Reich authorities - is indisputable. They supported the racial-ideological extermination machinery of the SS to a considerable extent by marginalizing the prisoners, permanently underproviding them with clothing and food, denying them all other basic human needs and forcing them to select prisoners who were unfit for work.

⁴⁹ Cf. Knieriem, Nuremberg, p. 546 f.

⁵⁰ Cf. on this and the following Knieriem, Nuremberg, p. 535 f.

In view of the almost overwhelming probative value of the documents, the verdicts of the military tribunal must therefore be described as extremely lenient. The conduct of the trial and the reasons for the verdict suggest that the majority of the judges were unable to free themselves from the general political situation of 1947 and 1948⁵¹. The differing opinions of the four judges of the Tribunal, which existed from the outset, were expressed, among other things, in the extensively reasoned dissenting opinion of Judge Hebert⁵². According to his interpretation of the evidence, the remaining 15 board members not convicted under count three would also have been found guilty in this respect. Presiding Judge Shake, on the other hand, demonstrated - before he had even heard Hebert's comments - how much he appreciated the defendants in the IG trial. In a letter to the British military governor in Düsseldorf, General Bishop, in the fall of 1948, he stated the following: "I have said to many convicted defendants in the Farben case that they have an unusual opportunity to perform good services for Germany and the world by reason of their unfortunate and tragic experience. I firmly believe that all of these men can and will make good citizens of the new and better Germany."⁵³

Like large parts of the German population, Judge Shake apparently also found it difficult to distinguish clearly between the categories of victims and perpetrators only three and a half years after the end of the war. When men who were demonstrably jointly responsible for the inhumane treatment and thousands of murders of concentration camp inmates are pitied here because of their "unfortunate and tragic experiences", this inevitably brings to mind the "inhumane and tragic experiences" of the German public.

The overall blurring of the meaning of the term, which ultimately turned war criminals into "war convicts"⁵⁴. From the beginning there was a tendency in the press coverage to see the trial less as a case against individually responsible IG managers and more as a case against all Germans⁵⁵. Accordingly, the West German papers discussed the indictment and the individual sections of the "monster trial"⁵⁶ and expressly emphasized that "every German [...] can see the effect of the verdict [...] would one day have to feel it for themselves"⁵⁷.

In spring 1948, *Die Zeit* then made it unmistakably clear what the "essential point" of the trial was "from the German point of view". Although it was left to the court to decide on the probative value of the documents under count three, the verbal linking of IG and concentration camps alone was obviously seen as a violation of the corporate honor: "In each case, however, it is shameful that the largest and most respected German industrial

⁵¹ Thus also Dubois, *Generals*, p. 355 f.

⁵² The text of his reasoning, which was not completed until five months after the end of the trial, can be found in NMT, vol. 8, p. 1211 ff., p. 1307 ff. On the relationship between the judges, see Dubois, *Generals*, p. 347 ff.

⁵³ Shake to Bishop, 10.11.1948, quoted from Dubois, *Generals*, p. 356.

⁵⁴ Cf. Frei, *Vergangenheitspolitik*, passim, especially p. 302.

⁵⁵ *Die Zeit*, January 22, 1948, p. 3.

⁵⁶ *Die Zeit*, 12.2.1948, p. 8.

⁵⁷ *Die Zeit*, January 22, 1948, p. 3.

The fact that an industrial corporation, and moreover the producer of drugs that have freed mankind from scourges such as malaria and sleeping sickness, is mentioned in connection with acts that are among the most terrible atrocities of the past era." The undisputed achievements of the company were obviously intended to create the impression that senior IG managers could not have been involved in such atrocities. Accordingly, the article concluded with the words that "this is not about individual industrialists and merchants", "but about the cleanliness of a German company name that is famous throughout the world"⁵⁸. *Spiegel* struck a similar tone after the end of the trial, according to which "three Americans" had pronounced their "judgments on whole sections of the German people" in Nuremberg. A few lines earlier, the magazine also supported the general criticism of the Nuremberg follow-up trials because they had been continued by the USA alone. The criticism of the continuation of the trials after the other three victorious powers had "long since" withdrawn from the Palace of Justice culminated in the statement, which was not free of racist undertones: "An American Negro unit is in charge."⁵⁹

The press initially commented cautiously on the verdicts in the IG trial. The Opponents of the follow-up trials against German war criminals now changed their tactics and no longer agitated against a single trial. Following their view that this was not about the actual defendants, but about all Germans, they promoted the gathering of practically all interest groups that were somehow involved. The large-scale campaign that developed in the following years, not only by relevant interest groups, but also by almost the entire German press, the churches and the first German government elected shortly afterwards, against upholding the verdicts against the war criminals was not without effect. Cleverly exploiting the changed global political situation, they pressured US High Commissioner John J. McCloy to grant a far-reaching pardon. Although the public debate had essentially revolved around the convicted Wehrmacht officers and civil servants, the last imprisoned IG managers also benefited from McCloy's pardon decree of January 31, 1951⁶⁰

- insofar as they had not already been released under the provisions relaxed in July 1950⁶¹.

With this decree, the criminal investigation into IG policy during the "Third Reich" was initially concluded. However, the acquittal of all defendants and thus of the IG as a whole from any significant involvement in Hitler's war of aggression (counts 1 and 5) had, contrary to the expectations of the German public, a negative impact on the company.

⁵⁸ Die Zeit, 12.2.1948, p. 8.

⁵⁹ Der Spiegel 33/1 1948, 14.8.1948, p. 8.

⁶⁰ Cf. Schwartz, Begnadigung, p. 406 ff.; Frei, Vergangenheitspolitik, p. 220 f.

⁶¹ In August 1950, in line with the practice in American prisons, ten days could now be credited per month of imprisonment for "good behavior". This new regulation probably meant that Krauch and ter Meer were released after their pre-trial detention was taken into account. Bütefisch was probably released around May 1950 due to his lengthy pre-trial detention. Only Ambros and Dürrfeld were presumably only released through McCloy's clemency decree; see Frei, Vergangenheitspolitik, p. 200; Der Spiegel, 35/1950, 31.8.1950, p. 3.

The fact that the press did not see a change in the American policy of disentanglement after 1948⁶². Although the Nuremberg Court's ruling had removed the legal basis for the dismantling of IG as determined by the Control Council, the Western Allied occupation authorities and subsequently the High Commission insisted, at least formally, on the dissolution of the conglomerate. In many respects, however, they gave in to the economic interests put forward by the Germans, which were now increasingly in the interests of the Western Allies. Nevertheless, the shareholders and partners concerned had major reservations about the unbundling measures, which were in no way confirmed by the developments of the following decades. Due to the constant German objections, the division of IG into individual companies dragged on for a long time anyway. It was not until January 1952, almost seven years after the end of the war, that the "I.G. Farbenindustrie in Liquidation" (IG i.L.) was founded at the site of the old corporate headquarters in Frankfurt am Main. On May 23, 1952, the Allied High Commission then authorized the formation of twelve successor companies from the ^{Group}'s assets with the implementing regulation for Law No. 3563.

Wollheim versus IG Farbenindustrie i.L.

While practically all the plants and facilities of IG Farbenindustrie AG were divided up among these smaller chemical companies following this decision, IG i.L. took over the legal succession of the former mammoth corporation. In addition to managing the remaining IG assets, the liquidation office, which continued to reside in Frankfurt am Main, apparently also devoted itself to restoring the company's international reputation. The first opportunity to demonstrate this came soon after IG i.L. was founded.

a former inmate worker at the Buna plant in Auschwitz filed a civil suit against the company⁶⁴. Norbert Wollheim, who had also appeared as a witness at the IG trial in Nuremberg, now demanded at least financial compensation for the forced labor he had performed in the service of the IG after the sentences, which he felt were all too lenient: a payment of DM 10,000 was to compensate the Jew Wollheim, who had been deported from Berlin, for his labor and symbolically make up for the suffering he had endured.

⁶² For the history of the unbundling of IG Farbenindustrie AG, see Kreikamp, *Entflechtung*, p. 228 ff.; Plumpe, *I.G. Farbenindustrie*, p. 756 ff.; Borkin, *I.G. Farben*, p. 141 ff.

⁶³ AHK, Law No. 35, 1 7.8. 1950; reprinted in: Reichelt, *Erbe*, p. 223 ff. The twelve successor companies were: Agfa-Camerawerk AG, Munich; BASF, Ludwigshafen; Casella Farbwerke AG, Mainkur; Chemische Werke Hüls GmbH, Marl; Farbenfabriken Bayer AG, Leverkusen; Farbwerke Hoechst AG, vorm. Meister Lucius & Brüning, Frankfurt-Hoechst; Titangesellschaft mbH, Leverkusen; Duisburger Kupferhütte, Duisburg; Dr. Alexander Wacker, Gesellschaft für Elektrotechnische Industrie mbH, Munich; Dynamit AG, Troisdorf; WASAG-Chemie AG, Sythen; Kalle & Co. AG, Biebrich.

⁶⁴ Cf. on this and the following Ferencz, *Slaves*, pp. 35 ff.; Benz, Wollheim, pp. 143-147.

Henry Ormond⁶⁵, also a German Jew, who had opened a law firm in Frankfurt in 1950 after returning from exile and working for the British military authorities, took over the representation of his lawsuit. In the proceedings before the Frankfurt Regional Court, the IG representatives repeated the arguments that had already been made: The SS, other state authorities, the contracted construction companies and corrupt prisoners were solely responsible for the suffering of the prisoners. The IG, on the other hand, had saved many from extermination, at least for a certain time, by employing the prisoners and serving them the "Buna soup". IG employee Savelsberg presented the court with detailed statistics and diagrams in order to refute the claims for retrospective compensation for the prisoners' work. According to these, the IG had paid the SS more for the prisoners than their work was actually worth. Consequently, Savelsberg argued, the company had fulfilled its financial obligations. The fact that the prisoners had not received a penny of this did not matter, according to the IG.

However, after extensive study of the files, including the Nuremberg IG proceedings, the court came to the conclusion that the chemical company was liable for the treatment of the inmate workers. The occurrence of the witnesses called by the former company, who, in the eyes of the judges, had shown "appalling indifference [...] towards the plaintiff and the captured Jews"⁶⁶. Apparently completely unimpressed by the court's statements, the IG now prepared the appeal hearing with all the more effort. At the same time, thousands of survivors from Monowitz contacted Ormond in the vague hope of also receiving financial compensation for the forced labor they had performed. In any case, it was clear that Wollheim and his lawyer, who had stood alone up to that point, needed professional and financial support for the claims procedure. The large Jewish organizations such as the Claims Conference or the United Restitution Organization (URO) found themselves in a difficult situation despite their sympathy for Wollheim's request⁶⁷. They were in the middle of negotiations about the state-level reparations suggested by German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer. A lawsuit against IG therefore represented a risk in their eyes, as it could provoke resistance from German industry to a general reparations law. On the other hand, renewed legal proceedings also represented a considerable risk for the IG i.L.. The compensation payments to be expected in the event of a conviction would not only hinder the complete liquidation of the IG property, but would also limit the development opportunities of the chemical shares. Both sides therefore had a considerable interest in resolving the issue of the claims of the former inmate workers in an amicable manner.

⁶⁵ Ormond's original name was Hans Öttinger, née Jakobsohn, but he had dropped his German name in exile. After his arrest by the Gestapo and a short time in Dachau concentration camp in 1938, he managed to escape from Germany.

⁶⁶ Benz, Wollheim, p. 145.

⁶⁷ Cf. Ferencz, *Slaves*, p. 37 f.

Negotiations then began in the spring of 1954, although they proved to be difficult. The company representatives were keen to settle all compensation claims definitively in a possible agreement and to set the lowest possible total amount. However, as there were no reliable figures on the number of Monowitz prisoners still alive, the negotiating partners' estimates initially varied by a factor of ten. In the course of the following months, the positions converged considerably, supported by new data, which now assumed around 6,000 potential claimants: Benjamin B. Ferencz as coordinator of the three Jewish organizations involved, Claims Conference, URO and the Jewish Restitution Successor Organization

(JRSO), now assumed a necessary sum of DM 66 million. The Liquidator of the IG, Walter Schmidt⁶⁸, at least held out the prospect of increasing the offer to DM 20 million⁶⁹.

In the meantime, the appeal proceedings in the *Wollheim v. IG i.L.* case continued. Against the background of the out-of-court negotiations, however, the judges apparently did not want to make a decision, but urged the litigants to reach an independent settlement. A certain amount of pressure was exerted on the IG

However, they made it clear in their statement published in mid-September that "certain injustices" had in any case taken place with the knowledge of the company⁷⁰. They thus implied that the IG was at least indirectly responsible for these events. The pressure for a swift agreement had also grown due to the efforts of German industry to have pre-war property in the USA restituted. These only had a chance of success if the ongoing and negative discussions in the American public about IG's involvement in the crimes at Auschwitz ceased as soon as possible.

After lengthy negotiations on the final amount of the total compensation and the inclusion of the non-Jewish Monowitz prisoners, the sum of 30 million DM was finally agreed at the beginning of 1957. One tenth of this amount was reserved for the non-Jewish claimants. Although the settlement still required the approval of the IG shareholders and a determination of the number of claimants, the public and the stock exchange already assumed at this point that a successful agreement had been reached: IG i.L. shares jumped ten percent in value. Compensation Treuhand⁷¹, which was set up to administer and pay out the compensation, spent the next few years examining the many thousands of claims⁷². The legitimacy of a claim was decided by former prisoners from Mo-

⁶⁸ The Berlin lawyer Walter Schmidt had been entrusted with this position by the Allies because of his anti-Nazi stance. He was also held in high esteem by Jewish organizations. Despite pressure from the Gestapo, he had steadfastly refused to divorce his Jewish wife.

⁶⁹ Cf. Ferencz, *Slaves*, p. 41 ff.

⁷⁰ Cf. Ferencz, *Slaves*, p. 44.

⁷¹ Cf. Ferencz, *Slaves*, p. 50 f.

⁷² Cf. Ferencz, *Slaves*, p. 52 ff.

nowitz in countless hours of voluntary work in offices around the world. A total of 5,855 Jewish prisoner workers in 42 countries received DM 27,841,500⁷³. After the successful image campaign among the German public, IG i.L., in cooperation with the successor companies, tried to exploit the compensation agreement internationally. For a flourishing export business, it was considered particularly necessary to influence the mood in the USA in the IG's favor. As early as August 1954, Bayer AG decided to appoint a former US general to represent its interests⁷⁴. General Julius Klein⁷⁵ apparently fulfilled his "task of handling the Wollheim agreement in the USA in terms of public relations" to the complete satisfaction of his clients. In any case, in March 1957, the IG i.L. wrote to Bayer expressing its delight at the "extraordinarily favorable success" of Klein's work in the United States⁷⁶. According to this, he had succeeded in "suppressing some bad press articles, influencing the journalistic statements in the American press in the way we had intended, and he may also have provided the impetus for the statements made by the members of the two legislative bodies". A commercial resurgence of the former IG companies in the USA was almost ten years after the IG trial.

now nothing stands in the way.

The situation was similar for the Group managers convicted at the time. Although they were not allowed to hold management positions in the successor companies of the now

IG Farben industry, but otherwise they did not appear to suffer any disadvantages as a result of their criminal records. On the contrary, even the state supported their "resocialization" in the up-and-coming economic boom country - their extensive experience was clearly indispensable for the development of the chemical industry in the Federal Republic. Carl Krauch, Fritz ter Meer and Heinrich Bütetisch acted as consultants in the conversion of synthetic fuel and rubber production to peacetime requirements. Otto Ambros became an advisor to the Bonn government in mid-1951 to support it in solving problems with the IG factories in southern Germany⁷⁷. Subsequently

⁷³ This value results from the agreed sum of DM 30 million after deduction of ten percent for the non-Jewish Monowitz prisoners and DM 750,000 repayment to the IG due to allegedly necessary higher payments to this group of victims. The remaining sum of DM 26,250,000 was increased by interest and after deduction of administrative costs to the amount mentioned in the text. The individual compensation amount depended on the length of imprisonment in Monowitz and the current need. As a rule, Buna prisoners who had been in the service of IG for more than six months received DM 5,000, the others DM 2,500. About a third received additional funds due to proven neediness; cf. in detail Ferencz, *Slaves*, pp. 54, 66.

⁷⁴ BAL, 08 1-002-007, Loehr to Bachern, 2 1.8.1954.

⁷⁵ Klein was also involved in public relations work in the USA for other German companies. Together with offices in Chicago, Washington and Frankfurt am Main, he was particularly involved in the recovery of German industrial property in the USA that had been confiscated by the American authorities during the war; see Ferencz, *Slaves*, p. 49.

⁷⁶ BAL, 08 1-002-007, Schmidt to Haberland, 4.3.1957.

⁷⁷ Cf. Dubois, *Generals*, p. 358 f.

He held management positions in various companies⁷⁸. Among other things, he was a member of the supervisory board of Scholven-Chemie AG in Gelsenkirchen. His long-time companion from Auschwitz, Walther Dürrfeld⁷⁹, also sat on the board of the same company, possibly not purely by chance.

After his dismissal, Heinrich Bütetisch also reached the highest positions in industry. Above all as a member of the Supervisory Board of Ruhrchemie AG, Oberhausen, he apparently achieved something so extraordinary that in 1964, at the instigation of the Federation of German Industries, he was awarded the Grand Cross of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany. However, his joy at receiving this prestigious award was short-lived. After an "unknown person from southern Germany" drew the attention of the Federal Presidential Office to Bütetisch's past, research into his former activities began. Until then, the officials had relied on the preliminary work of their colleagues who had suggested him. The Order Department of the Düsseldorf State Chancellery had in fact proceeded properly and had

"routinely" requested "information from the Office for the Protection of the Constitution and a criminal record extract". However, the sentence from the Nuremberg follow-up trial was not listed therein. On 11. On March 11, 1964, the North Rhine-Westphalian Minister of Economic Affairs, Kienbaum, finally presented the medal to Bütetisch.

The investigations that soon followed led to the revocation of the Cross of Merit by Federal President Lübke⁸⁰ after just sixteen days, on Good Friday 1964. This reclamation was a novelty in the still young history of the Federal German orders and was by no means inevitable. Although this procedure complied with the rules of the Order's statutes, these had obviously been interpreted differently in the past. Friedrich Jähne, who had just been convicted in the IG trial, albeit only to a sentence of eight to ten months, had already received the Grand Order of Merit with Star in 1960 – and kept it. The rigorous approach in Bütetisch's case was certainly helped by the fact that, by a strange coincidence, his earlier activities were the subject of the Frankfurt Auschwitz trial eight days after the award of the Order, which brought greater attention to the matter.

The IG Farben industry in the Frankfurt Auschwitz trial

The "Ordens Affair" was very much in line with the longstanding efforts of the East Berlin regime to denounce the inadequate prosecution of Nazi perpetrators in the Federal Republic. The preparations for the trial before the Oath Court

⁷⁸ Otto Ambros' activities included the following functions: Deputy Chairman of the Supervisory Board of Süddeutsche Kalkstickstoff-Werke AG, Trostberg; Supervisory Board member of Telefunken-AG, Berlin, VIAG, Bonn and Braunschweig, Bergwerksgesellschaft Hibernia AG, Herne, and Scholven-Chemie AG, Gelsenkirchen; Board of Directors of Berliner Handelsgesellschaft, Berlin/ Frankfurt/M.; see Braunbuch, p. 48. However, he was forbidden by the new Board of Executive Directors from entering his "home company" BASF until his death.

⁷⁹ Dürrfeld was a member of the Management Board of Scholven-Chemie AG, Gelsenkirchen, and a member of the Supervisory Board of Phenolchemie GmbH, Gladbeck, and Friesecke und Hoepfner GmbH, Erlangen; see Braunbuch, p. 50 f.

⁸⁰ On this and the following: Der Spiegel, April 8, 1964, p. 22 ff.

The Frankfurt am Main court case against former members of the Auschwitz concentration camp guards had already attracted the attention of the Politburo in the early 1960s. The GDR authorities willingly provided the Frankfurt public prosecutor's office with incriminating material and witnesses in the probably justified expectation that this would strengthen the "role and reputation of the GDR in the international public eye"⁸¹. Shortly before the trial began at the end of 1963, intensive preparations were made by the SED leadership to shape the Frankfurt proceedings as far as possible in their favor. One important success was the admission of Friedrich Karl Kaul as a joint plaintiff, who officially represented the interests of the relatives of victims of KL Auschwitz living in the GDR.

However, its actual task went much further, as a resolution of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the SED of December 18, 1963 had stipulated. According to this, the GDR representatives involved in the trial were, on the one hand, to present their state to the international public as the guardian of the interests of "all anti-fascists and victims of Nazi terror". On the other hand, Kaul had the task of "transforming the Auschwitz trial into a tribunal against the IG Farben war criminal corporation and thus bringing the whole truth about the concentration camp and Nazi crimes to light"⁸². In order to secure the support of the Polish authorities, who by their very nature were intensively involved in the procurement of evidence

three employees of the responsible SED Politburo member Albert Norden⁸³ traveled to Warsaw from April 21 to 23, 1964 for "consultations on joint actions against West German revanchism and the heavily incriminated fascists in the Bonn state apparatus"⁸⁴. One of the main topics was again the "Exposure of IG Farben", where they hoped for "greater activity on the part of Polish comrades".

In order to come closer to this goal, the "GDR joint plaintiffs' representatives" filed an "extensive motion for evidence" in mid-1964, which was intended to "obtain the reading of numerous documents incriminating IG Farben in the most serious way during the trial"⁸⁵. In addition, they planned to file "criminal charges against the IG Farben directors Dürrfeld, Faust, Ambros and Bütetisch" in order to bring them to justice.

"direct participation in the planning and execution of the mass murders in the Auschwitz concentration camp". Such far-reaching accusations must have met with considerable reservations on the part of the West German authorities. After all

⁸¹ BAB, SAPMO, IV A2/2.028, No. 7, strictly confidential report on the business trip to Bamberg and Frankfurt, 6.3. 1963, p. 4.

⁸² BAB, SAPMO, IV A2/2.028, No. 10, Information on the first results of the appearance of the GDR representatives in the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial, May 14, 1964, p. 1.

⁸³ Albert Norden headed the so-called Western Department of the SED Politburo, whose main task was the targeted dissemination of anti-Western propaganda in the Federal Republic of Germany.

⁸⁴ BAB, SAPMO, IV A2/2.028, No. 6, Report on our consultations in Warsaw, 27.4.1964, S. 1 ff.

⁸⁵ BAB, SAPMO, IV A2/2.028, No. 10, Information on the first results of the appearance of the GDR representatives in the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial, May 14, 1964, p. 4. According to this document, the request for evidence was filed on June 1 1964, while the document itself is dated May 14, 1964. One of

the two dates is probably due to a typing error.

However, Kaul succeeded in obtaining the interrogation and testimony of former IG employees.

For the "criminal case against Mulka and others"⁸⁶, the questioning of Krauch, Ambros, Bütelfisch, Dürrfeld and Faust yielded no usable information⁸⁷. In their statements made in court or at their place of residence during the spring of 1965, the witnesses could no longer remember any details in connection with the IG Auschwitz plant. An awareness of injustice in relation to the events there does not appear to have developed in the almost two decades since the trial in Nuremberg. Otto Ambros said of the proceedings at the time: "It is still unclear to me today why I was convicted."⁸⁸ Kaul's attempts to capitalize on the interrogation of the IG witnesses for propaganda purposes were therefore initially unsuccessful. Finally, the defense attorney for the defendant Klehr, Laternser, helped him gain public attention with his response to the witness Erich Markowitsch. Although the former Monowitz prisoner was unable to make any detailed statements on the subject of the trial, he did cause some disquiet in the courtroom. Laternser recommended that the court provisionally arrest the witness Markowitsch, who had risen from camp worker to Minister of Industry in the GDR, because of his suspected involvement in the construction of the Wall. According to eyewitnesses, Kaul exposed his true face as a "politruk" with his ill-tempered retort, but without gaining any sympathy through his appearance⁸⁹.

Although not everything had gone according to the GDR Politburo's plans during this first trial in Frankfurt, a very similar procedure was planned for the second Auschwitz trial. One of the defendants in this case was the SDG Gerhard Neubert, responsible for the Monowitz infirmary, who was directly involved in the selections. Once again, a "motion for evidence against the IG Farben directors" was to be filed in this context. However, East Berlin hoped that the trial against Horst Fischer, the SS doctor responsible for Monowitz, would have a far greater influence on the ongoing proceedings. He had been discovered by chance and arrested in June 1965 after having lived unnoticed for 20 years as a country doctor under his real name in Spreenhagen in the district of Frankfurt an der Oder. His arrest provided the occasion for a socialist show trial, which "had to become a real model trial against the Auschwitz murderers and IG Farben", as Norden's office put it. Even if Fischer's responsibility for thousands of selections in Monowitz is not in question, it must be said that he was not given a fair trial in East Berlin. The timing, course and verdict of the trial were planned by the

⁸⁶ This was the official name of the first Frankfurt Auschwitz trial, in which 22 former members of the Auschwitz concentration camp guard team stood trial between December 20, 1963 and August 19, 1965. SS Hauptscharführer Robert Mulka was at times the adjutant of the Auschwitz camp commandant, Rudolf Höß. In the trial, Mulka was sentenced to 14 years in prison for "joint complicity in the joint murder of at least seven hundred and fifty people in at least four cases".

⁸⁷ Cf. the conscientious documentation of the Frankfurt Trial in Naumann, Auschwitz, pp. 438, 446 ff.

⁸⁸ Naumann, Auschwitz, p. 47 f.

⁸⁹ Cf. Naumann, Auschwitz, p. 436 ff.

West department exclusively according to the requirements of political propaganda. One of Norden's employees summarized the objective succinctly: "In my opinion, it would be favorable if the trial were to take place two to three weeks before the end of the West German trial, i.e. around the end of February/beginning of March. It would only have to last a few days, but its course and verdict would have to influence the West German trial, denounce the guilt of IG Farben and take place with the participation of several representatives from Western countries."⁹⁰

The GDR judicial authorities meticulously put this plan into practice. The trial in March 1 1966, in which Fischer was sentenced to death, lasted exactly 14 days⁹¹. It soon became clear who the East Berlin regime "actually wanted on the prosecution bench here"⁹². After just two days of the trial, it seemed to the reporter of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* "as if the concentration camp crimes had been pushed completely into the background in order to put the 'backers' and 'beneficiaries' of the concentration camps in the right propaganda light". The *Berliner Zeitung* (East) finally disseminated the official state view quite bluntly: "In addition to the Auschwitz doctor Fischer, the IG Farben corporation is also sitting invisibly in the dock." Large parts of the indictment before the Supreme Court of the German Democratic Republic did not even deal with the person of the accused, but denounced in detail the involvement of IG Farben in the crimes of the SS at⁹³. In addition to the poorly differentiated accusations against the company, the propagandistic character of the indictment is evident from the fact that it refers several times to the later functions of the IG managers: The activities of the "war criminal Dürrfeld"⁹⁴ in the 1960s, for example, were of course in no way connected, not even indirectly, with the crimes of the SS doctor Fischer.

The public discussion about the role of the IG Farben industry in Auschwitz, which had already been triggered by the first Frankfurt Auschwitz trial, prompted its successor company to issue a statement regarding IG Farben's involvement in the crimes at Auschwitz⁹⁵. The content of this dossier shows in a frightening way how little the German chemical industry had come to terms with its own past during the first two post-war decades. The basic tenor of the 17-page document is at least as far removed from the actual events in and around the Auschwitz plant as the propaganda from East Berlin.

⁹⁰ BAB, SAPMO, IV A2/2.028, No. 10, Rehahn to Norden, Dec. 2, 1965, p. 1 f.

⁹¹ Fischer was executed at the beginning of July 1966. The press office of the Attorney General of the GDR did not provide further details. *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, July 9/10, 1966, p. 1.

⁹² *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, March 28, 1966, p. 3. Similar reporting in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, March 26, 1966, p. 17 f., and in *Die Zeit*, April 1, 1966, p. 15.

⁹³ BAL, 207-010, transcript of the indictment, pp. 6-14, 20-29.

⁹⁴ BAL, 207-010, transcript of the indictment, p. 9.

⁹⁵ On this and the following: BAL, 4-D-Au, Die I.G. Farbenindustrie und der Bau einer chemischen Fabrik Auschwitz 1941-1944, June 1964.

The presentation makes an almost grotesque attempt to avoid any kind of The defendants deny the connection between the concentration camp and the IG by the very fact that the factory was built "more than 7 km away on the opposite side of Auschwitz"⁹⁶. This is followed by a long series of apologetic assertions, many of which repeat verbatim the defendants' statements from the Nuremberg trial. The memorandum flatly rejects any responsibility for the fate of the prisoners, on the one hand with the well-known argument that the camp inmates had been forced upon the IG, and on the other hand with the imaginative explanation that the construction had basically not been carried out by the IG at all, but by the companies commissioned by it. In addition, the factory management is said to have endeavored from the outset to keep the proportion of prisoners in the workforce as low as possible. This is just as incompatible with the surviving sources as the claim that it had "now been clearly confirmed" that "labor camps" such as Monowitz meant "a significant improvement overall for the prisoners compared to the conditions in the concentration camps"⁹⁷. Finally, a formulation in the appendix makes clear how little the management committees of the IG successor companies had actually distanced themselves from Nazi ideas in the mid-1960s: the author saw the Polish concentration camp prisoners at the start of construction in 1941 as "essentially criminals"⁹⁸ - and thus implicitly suggests that they probably deserved harsh treatment.

The IG's efforts to put itself in the right light in the German public eye were obviously not crowned with success in every respect. In fact, the East Berlin efforts around the turn of the year 1965/66 led to the opening of federal German investigations because "in the so-called Auschwitz Trial II, people from the former IG had been incriminated"⁹⁹. On the basis of a witness statement provided by the Main Commission for the Investigation of National Socialist Crimes in Warsaw, research into the person of Walther Dürrfeld initially appeared to be the most promising¹⁰⁰. His right

⁹⁶ The same argument is formulated even more harshly in an internal chronicle of **BASF**, which was largely responsible for the Buna factory in Auschwitz: "Little is known about Auschwitz, except that it was mainly exploited by the Americans as a means of incitement against the I.G., although the acts of extermination of Jews there took place in the party concentration camp [they], which was independent of the plant and far away, and the SS was also responsible for the forced laborers at the Auschwitz plant outside of work." The individual distortions and euphemisms will not be repeated here. BASF - Corporate Archives, IG AG - A 25 1/4, "Neue Chronik v. Dr. H." betr. "I.G. successors in the Russ. Zone", 11.1.1957.

⁹⁷ BAL, 4-D-Au, Die I.G. Farbenindustrie und der Bau einer chemischen Fabrik Auschwitz 1941-1944, June 1964, p. 8.

⁹⁸ BAL, 4-D-Au, "on the letter from Ambros to ter Meer from April 12, 1941", June 1964, p. I. In fact, these early camp inmates were primarily political prisoners. In addition to active resistance fighters, they mainly included members of the Polish intelligentsia; see Piper, Zahl, p. 45.

⁹⁹ StA Frankfurt a.M., criminal case 4 Ks 2/63, folder 26, General Public Prosecutor Frankfurt/Main to Senior Public Prosecutor of the Regional Court of Frankfurt am Main, 26.1.1966.

¹⁰⁰ StA Frankfurt a.M., criminal case 4 Ks 2/63, folder 26, order of the Central Office Ludwigsburg, 24.9.1965, on the statements of Michael Eschmann against Dürrfeld.

A thin preliminary investigation file (eight sheets) had already been sent from Ludwigsburg to Frankfurt/Main by the Central Office of the State Justice Administrations at the beginning of December 1965¹⁰¹. However, no further proceedings took place, as a district doctor's report declared Dürrfeld, who had fallen seriously ill in the meantime, to be no longer fit for questioning in April 1966¹⁰².

The course of the second Frankfurt Auschwitz trial, in which SDG Neubert was one of the defendants, probably did not live up to the hopes of the leading East Berlin lawyers either. Neither did the work of IG Farben in Auschwitz play a major role here, nor were the judges impressed by the rigorous sentencing in the Fischer trial. The jury court at the Frankfurt am Main Regional Court sentenced Neubert to three and a half years in prison for 35 counts of accessory to murder¹⁰³. His sentence was mitigated by the fact that witnesses had confirmed his compassionate attitude towards the prisoners.

This finally put an end to the criminal prosecution of the deeds of the IG managers and the SS men at the IG Auschwitz factory and camp. In view of the countless atrocious crimes committed in Monowitz, most of whose individual perpetrators could no longer be identified, criminal law had proved to be an unsuitable means of achieving justice¹⁰⁴. The special circumstances of the concentration camp made it almost impossible to apply the legal norms created for civilian society.

The role of the prisoner functionaries

In the course of the investigations into the first two Auschwitz trials, it became increasingly clear how much of the inhumane living conditions were attributable to the prisoner functionaries. While in the immediate post-war period a general distinction was made between prisoners as victims on the one hand and SS perpetrators on the other, the picture became more differentiated as time passed. The central role played by the camp guards, Kapos and other "prominent figures" in the orderly running of the camps was initially hardly noticed by the investigating authorities. Witness testimonies about brutal excesses, especially in the "green" prisoner functionaries, but proving criminal responsibility, i.e. individual responsibility, proved to be extremely complicated. Most of the victims were no longer able to testify themselves, often not even their names were known. Witness accounts, especially those that were only given after two decades, often contradicted each other. The everyday nature of the acts of violence in the

¹⁰¹ StA Frankfurt a.M., criminal case 4 Ks 2/63, folder 26, Central Office Ludwigsburg to Attorney General at the Higher Regional Court Frankfurt/Main, December 3, 1965.

¹⁰² StA Frankfurt a.M., criminal case 4 Ks 2/63, folder 26, district medical report, 19.4.1966, p. 1 f. Dürrfeld died shortly afterwards as a result of his serious illness.

¹⁰³ StA Frankfurt a.M., judgment in the criminal case 4 Ks 3/63, 16.9. 1966, reasons for judgment against Neubert, S. 164.

¹⁰⁴ On the problem of the legal prosecution of "crimes against humanity", which far exceed the usual dimensions of criminal law, see the publications of H. Jäger; in particular ders, *Strafrecht*, S. 143 ff.

The fact that the camps were not organized in such a way that it was only possible in the rarest of cases to clearly attribute observations to a specific maltreatment or murder. The strict standards of criminal law therefore made it considerably more difficult to punish crimes committed in the camps.

Investigation proceedings were therefore only initiated against those prisoner functionaries whose prominent position and behavior had left an indelible mark on the memories of many survivors. A further difficulty for prosecutors and judges was how to assess mistreatment and killings, even if they could be directly attributed to individual persons, in the context of camp conditions. The argument of "Befehlsnotstand" (necessity of orders), which IG members and former SS men also put forward in their defense, applied to prisoners to a much greater extent, at least at first glance. A conviction was therefore only possible where a prisoner functionary had clearly gone beyond the usual level of brutality in the camp. Such evidence was provided, for example, in the trial of the former head captain of the "Buna Kommando", Bernhard Bonitz, and the first inmate of Monowitz, Josef Windeck¹⁰⁵. Although accused of countless murders and acts of torture by former prisoners, both could only be brought to justice in comparatively few cases. The jury court at the Frankfurt district court sentenced Bonitz and Windeck in the June 1 1968 on the main charge of murder in one and two cases respectively. each to life imprisonment¹⁰⁶.

In the first half of the 1960s, the Frankfurt public prosecutor's office initiated proceedings against Stefan Buthner, the former camp elder of the infirmary in Monowitz.

years also initiated an extensive investigation, which it concluded in May 1966. attached to another case for preliminary investigation¹⁰⁷. However, the first complaint about the alleged selection of a prisoner had already been received by the French authorities in 1 1946¹⁰⁸. It was based on the statements of three former Monowitz prisoners, but apparently did not lead to an investigation of the accusations made against Buthner. It was not until the Central Office and the public prosecutor's office at the Frankfurt Regional Court summarized the investigations that the Buthner case could be dealt with in detail. From the outset, however, the work proved to be extremely difficult and opaque, as the witnesses' statements contradicted each other in many cases. Taken together, they painted a picture of a Janus-faced person: survivors from Monowitz who were Jewish or had belonged to the communist resistance organization generally accused Buthner of being an unscrupulous assistant to the SS, whose anti-Semitism even led him to select Jewish prisoners himself.

¹⁰⁵ For the deeds of Bonitz and Windeck, see Chapter III.2.

¹⁰⁶ StA Frankfurt a.M., judgment in the criminal case 4 Ks 1 /67, 14.6. 1 1968.

¹⁰⁷ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 1474, decision of 12.9. 1 1975.

6.5.1966, the preliminary investigation against Buthner was part of the proceedings against "Ontl and others", criminal case 4 Js 444/59.

¹⁰⁸ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 928 f., statement by Barszczewski, undated.

drove them to their deaths. Non-Jewish Poles, on the other hand, glorified his person and his actions, as the majority of them believed they owed their lives to him.

The reason for these widely divergent views probably lies in the special role that Buthner had assumed as camp elder of the infirmary. As described above, he endeavored to transform the poorly equipped buildings into a functioning hospital in which the prisoners were treated by medical professionals as well as possible under the camp conditions. As a result of these changes, many members of the communist resistance organization, which had previously provided the staff almost without exception, lost their posts, as none of them had any medical training. The replacement of political functionaries with nurses and doctors therefore inevitably met with resistance from the communist group in Monowitz, whose actions were already geared towards confrontation before Buthner's arrival. The informer Lindenbaum, who was set on him but quickly unmasked, was one of Buthner's most vehement accusers in ¹⁰⁹.

Although the treatment options in the infirmary improved considerably under Buthner's regime, the "communists" who were defeated in this "battle for power" continued to agitate against their Polish adversary. After the end of the war, this negative portrayal was initially included in Eugen Kogon's standard work "The SS State" ¹¹⁰. Reports to the contrary and a conversation with Buthner eventually led to the removal of the "very harsh accusation" from the book.

the following editions. Kogon came to the conclusion that Stephan Heymann, a "very active communist" in Monowitz and afterwards, had "taken action" against Buthner "for political motives of his party". In fact, there is much to support Kogon's argument that "personal differences" were the cause of Heymann's defamatory statements.

Compared to the otherwise predominant behavior of former prisoners not to incriminate their fellow inmates in any way, so as not to diminish the guilt of the SS ¹¹¹, the "Buthner case" is a rare exception. The ideological contrast between national Polish and communist members of the resistance, which had already weakened the "prisoner self-administration" in the camp, thus had an impact far beyond 1945. In addition to Heymann's political fanaticism, which also succeeded in mobilizing many actually uninvolved former prisoners ¹¹², Buthner's post-war career may also have played a certain role. While many former "red" prisoners did not have an easy life in West Germany either, Buthner became a wealthy man as the head physician of a private surgical clinic.

The accusations against Buthner initiated by Heymann could not be substantiated despite extensive investigations (around 1,500 pages). In most cases

¹⁰⁹ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 51 ff., statement by Lindenbaum, undated.

¹¹⁰ On this and the following: StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 13 f., statement by Kogon, 24.4.1951.

¹¹¹ StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 494 ff., statement by Trajster.

¹¹² Statements by Stasiak, Trajster, Wellers, Buthner, Drohocki, Langbein, Rausch in StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64.

They were based only on hearsay or contradicted other incriminating statements, not to mention the large number of exculpatory statements. Buthner was consequently suspended from prosecution by order of September 12, 1975. However, his participation in the selections in the Monowitz infirmary had been clearly proven and had not been denied by Buthner. In this respect, in the opinion of the judge in charge, the camp elder was an "accessory to murder", which, however, was "excused by necessity in the sense of § 54 StGB"¹¹³.

The criminal investigation into the events at the Monowitz camp had dragged on for over thirty years - with interruptions. It did not provide adequate instruments for bringing the guilty IG managers, SS members and prisoner functionaries to justice in an appropriate manner. This does not indicate a deficiency in the criminal law that was created to punish individual crimes. If the victims numbered in the hundreds and thousands, the murders were

Since the deaths and ill-treatment took place in a shielded setting without any rights for the prisoners, his means were doomed to failure. The significance of the Nuremberg Trials and the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trials¹¹⁴ however, goes far beyond the conviction of those individually responsible. The proceedings before the American military tribunal in Nuremberg took place in a very unfavorable political constellation, which made a genuine social debate about its results impossible: the desire of the overwhelming majority of Germans to make a new start without the moral burden of the past coincided with the desire of the American occupying power to make the western zones a strong ally in the incipient Cold War. While the sentences and the swift release of the convicted IG members reflected this situation, the work of the prosecution was of much more long-term significance. Working meticulously with limited personnel, it created an extensive and easily accessible pool of sources on various areas of the twelve years of National Socialist rule. The evaluation of the documents at that time and the conclusions drawn from them came much closer to the actual events at the IG Auschwitz factory and camp in many respects than most historical works up to the beginning of the 1990s.

Overall, German contemporary history research in particular showed great reluctance to deal with the National Socialist concentration camps or even the involvement of social groups outside the SS. The first impetus for a historical investigation of the events in and around Auschwitz came from outside. The investigations by German authorities against Nazi criminals, which only began at the end of the 1950s, slowly drew society's attention back to this hitherto suppressed area. Fritz Bauer, the Frankfurt Public Prosecutor General responsible for the prosecution of Nazi criminals, quickly recognized the need to establish a historically sound basis for the investigation.

m StA Frankfurt a.M., Ermittlungssache 4 Js 798/64, p. 1474 ff., Beschluss vorn 12.9.1975, p. 5.

¹¹⁴ Although the first Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial (1963-1965), which was in fact the most significant in various respects and the most widely discussed by the public, is usually only mentioned, there were also a number of follow-up trials. In total, at least six Frankfurt Auschwitz trials took place, which lasted until the 1980s.

to create a basis for central questions about the Nazi era so that they would not have to be re-established in each individual trial. This resulted in the expert reports on central areas of the history of the "Third Reich", which later became known as the "Analysis of the SS State" and which still represent fundamental work in many respects. Without the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trials, German contemporary history research, particularly on the concentration camps, would be inconceivable. In any case, it would have started differently and, above all, later.

Until the 1990s, the legal treatment of the consequences of forced labor under Nazi rule contributed significantly to social awareness of the responsibility of IG Farben and its successor companies. The civil law issues have still not been fully clarified. More than 50 years after the end of the war and well over 40 years after its "unbundling", "IG Farben in liquidation" still exists. After German reunification, it laid claim to its land, which had been expropriated by the USSR. The successor companies to IG Farben continue to find it difficult to deal with the events of the Nazi era, although the doors of the archives are now opening to independent researchers. An open confrontation with their past would be a good thing for these companies, which are among the most profitable in the Federal Republic of Germany. Publicly acknowledging their shared responsibility for the crimes at Auschwitz before the last survivors of Monowitz have died would be a desirable signal of reconciliation. In any case, the name "IG Auschwitz" will remain a symbol of the murder of countless Jewish inmate workers in the Monowitz and Birkenau concentration camps for the unforeseeable future.

The IG managers: "Quite normal men" or "willing executors"

Irrespective of the legal investigation of the crimes associated with IG Auschwitz, a much more fundamental question arises: How could it happen that internationally respected and previously blameless industrial managers became accomplices in the murder of thousands of Jews?

were they? Were they "completely normal men" ¹¹⁵ who were driven to do so by extraordinary circumstances - or were they "willing executors" ¹¹⁶ who were just were waiting for an external occasion to give free rein to their long-suppressed anti-Semitism? In order to clarify this, it is necessary to take another comprehensive look at the situation, the motives and the purpose for which the employees of the IG became henchmen of the SS executioners.

In the immediate post-war period, neither the German public nor the defendants themselves were able to understand the fact that well-educated, above-average intelligent and successful engineers were involved in the brutal crimes of the SS at Auschwitz. In the psychologically comprehensible

¹¹⁵ This is how Browning, *Männer*, especially p. 208 ff., refers to the members of a police commando who were involved in the planned shootings of Jews.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Goldhagen, *Vollstrecker*, p. 94.

In an understandable rejection of the collective guilt of the entire German people, people went (and still go) so far as to attribute all atrocities to the small group of high SS leaders. Once the initial shock of the Nazi crimes had passed, many Germans simply refused to accept the involvement of other social groups. Not even the defendants in the IG trial were aware of their shared responsibility. This attitude was probably more than just a clever tactic on the part of the defense.

Within their own mindset, the IG managers had nothing to reproach themselves for, because in their view they had done nothing other than their duty to their country. The realization that their actions had blatantly violated the conventions of human coexistence between civilized nations was a painful process that not everyone was willing or able to undergo. In order not to have to give up the self-image they had developed over decades, they went so far as to simply deny irrefutable facts ¹¹⁷. Despite the many people killed by exhaustion, maltreatment or gas, they continued to believe that IG was a particularly exemplary company, especially in social matters. Otto Ambros went so far as to argue that the longer the prisoners worked at IG Auschwitz, the better off they were ¹¹⁸. Against the background of an average life expectancy of three months, this is a completely absurd and cynical statement. However, it makes it clear once again that these were not brutal sadists, cold-blooded criminals or psychopaths. Rather, these statements must be understood as justification strategies of "completely normal men", who were inconspicuous and sometimes even deeply religious people in their civilian social behavior ¹¹⁹.

When Ambros, Bütelfisch and Dürrfeld tried to allocate prisoners in the spring of 1941, their aim was to find the cheapest possible labor contingent. Although they had to be aware that the camp inmates were housed in poor conditions, this was not initially a matter for the SS. Over the next few months, the management was still shocked by the brutality with which the Kapos and SS men treated the inmates. However, after their work performance left much to be desired and half-hearted attempts to deploy them more efficiently had been unsuccessful, they apparently increasingly adopted the attitude of the camp SS. Instead of remedying the main cause of the prisoners' lack of productivity - namely their completely inadequate accommodation, food and recreation - Dürrfeld and his staff now also sought the solution in stricter discipline and supervision. This did not increase the work performance, but only the mortality rate to an alarmingly high level, which is why they reached an agreement with Maurer on the exchange of "spent" prisoners for new and strong ones.

¹¹⁷ Nümbg. doc. NI-1 0929, statement Braus, 23.8. 1947, p. 4a f. Nümbg. doc. NI-1 1 046, statement Dürrfeld, 24.2. 1947. Op. 31 f., 41 ff.

¹¹⁸ StA Frankfurt a.M., criminal case 4 K,s 2/63, folder 26, statement Dürrfeld, April 9, 1965.

¹¹⁹ Karl Braus, for example, was surprised "at Otto Ambras' personal disposition as a man and a Christian" about his close cooperation with the SS leadership. Nümbg. doc. NI- 1 0929, Braus statement, 23.8. 1947, p. 4.

lings were closed. Through its pressure for a low sickness rate and an equally moderate level of performance, the management forced the selection of so-called unfit workers into the gas chambers at Birkenau.

Although none of the leading IG employees wanted to mistreat or even kill prisoners, they nevertheless became accomplices in this way. In addition to the brutal treatment of the prisoners by the SS, which was apparently all too obvious in the literal sense, other circumstances also contributed to this gradual loss of civilized standards of behaviour. On the one hand, all IG employees and the contracted construction companies were under enormous deadline pressure, which put each individual under considerable psychological strain. However, this could only explain occasional lapses on the part of supervisors and foremen, but not the systematic "exploitation" of thousands of Jewish prisoners. The management and Otto Ambros as the responsible board member had deliberately maneuvered themselves into another predicament. According to their vision, IG Auschwitz was not just to become an armaments plant, but the most modern "large-scale chemical plant", which for the first time combined the synthetic production of fuel and chewing gum. The German colonial empire "in the East" that they hoped for in the near future was to serve as an inexhaustible market for their diverse chemical products. The enormous spatial and financial possibilities on the eastern border of the German Reich thus also offered space for the personal career aspirations of the managers involved. However, the complex and elaborate construction intensified the time pressure and forced the company to justify itself to the Reich authorities. In order to prevent the overall project and the individual plans from failing, it was evidently prepared to put aside certain ethical concerns that still existed. This was all the easier as the Jewish prisoners were undoubtedly about to be murdered anyway. In addition, the leading IG managers involved in Auschwitz not only accepted cooperation with the highest authorities of the National Socialist state, but sought it. In contrast to the otherwise claimed ideological distance between the IG and Nazi leadership, the close, even friendly contacts up to Himmler were emphasized at every opportunity¹²⁰. This was most obvious with Bütetisch as a member of the circle of friends of the Reichsführer SS.

With this positive basic attitude towards the NS regime and its ideological It was easier to justify a "harsh" approach to the prisoners. The management's perseverance until the immediate deployment of the Red Army also supports this conviction. Had long-term planning

Although the construction companies had already begun planning for the post-war period in 1943¹²¹, there was no sign of this in Auschwitz. Instead of bringing as much of the equipment and material as possible to the former Reich as early as possible, Dürrfeld blocked the construction companies that wanted to bring their equipment to safety days before the evacuation.

¹²⁰ This is one of the ways in which Ambros' assistant's remark in the C Committee can be interpreted. Nümbg. doc. NI-982 1, Klenck statement, January 9, 1947, as well as Pohl's statement on Ambros' friendship with Himmler. Nümbg. doc. NI-382, statement by Pohl, 5 Aug. 1946.

¹²¹ Cf. Herbst, War, p. 34 1 ff.

However, the close cooperation with and ideological proximity of leading IG employees to senior Nazi functionaries and the resulting responsibility cannot simply be transferred to the IG Group as a whole. Such a blanket approach, as put forward by some authors¹²², simplifies the facts (in an inadmissible manner) and conceals the actual causes. The involvement of the management in the crimes at Auschwitz can therefore also be

not be understood as the "normality of a capitalist leap in development"¹²³, because the inhumanity of the use of prisoners in the Buna factory resulted not because of economic considerations. While in the beginning the prospect of cheap labor had indeed determined the IG's approach, over time working conditions were shaped by ever-increasing time pressure, supply bottlenecks, personal ambition and the influence of the constantly propagated racist image of man. A company acting purely on the basis of cost-benefit considerations, on the other hand, would have had no interest in destroying its potential workforce, as every change meant a loss of knowledge and routine and thus reduced work productivity on a construction site.

However, it cannot be denied that a company like the IG can easily be placed in the service of undemocratic forces if external circumstances permit. The chemical company was not a supporter of Nazi policies from the outset. On the contrary, the IG's global economic interests and Hitler's drive for autarchy initially seemed to be mutually exclusive. However, once the regime had established itself, the company management tried to come to terms with its plans¹²⁴. The decision to support German rearmament and neglect old business areas in order to largely protect control of the company from state intervention proved to be fatal. Genuine resistance to government demands was hardly possible after that; the company had become dependent on government orders and could only try to keep them profitable in the short term. The restriction of IG's research activities in its typical export areas and the tying up of most investment funds for armaments purposes attacked the company's substance in the medium and long term.

In the fall of 1940, the IG Executive Board could therefore hardly refuse the Reich authorities' request for another Buna plant, as there was a certain risk of losing the monopoly on Buna production if they refused. Even though the project received considerable subsidies, it still tied up the company's immense financial and, above all, human resources. The attempt to create a plant that was as universal as possible, suitable for peace and profitable in the long term, against the interests of the state, was therefore all too understandable.

¹²² Cf. Roth, I.G. Auschwitz. StA Frankfurt a.M., criminal case 4 Ks 2/63, folder 26, Kuczinski report.

¹²³ Thus Roth, I.G. Auschwitz.

¹²⁴ Cf. in detail Hayes, Industry, p. 69 ff.

With the start of construction in Auschwitz, the company's involvement in the crimes committed in the concentration camps there was almost inevitable. However, the character of the cooperation with the SS was determined to a decisive degree by the selection of the managers responsible for the factory. Even in the case of the plant manager Dürrfeld, who was particularly responsible, the surviving sources do not support the dictum of the "willing executor". The "elimination" of the Jewish prisoners was not his primary goal. Much more devastating than

In reality, his anti-Semitic prejudices were reinforced by his distancing from all forms of human suffering, which was reinforced by his career ambitions and war propaganda ¹²⁵. Although it almost exclusively affected Jews as a result, it was Dürrfeld's racism was not the sole driving force behind his actions. As with many other senior IG managers, individual motives also played a role, as did the general phenomenon of a purely abstract perception of economic processes in the modern industrial world based on the division of labor. There can therefore be no monocausal answer to the question of where responsibility for the events in Monowitz lies: The personal ambition of the leading managers, their susceptibility to ideological phrases, the disastrous attempt to see everything only through economic glasses and the lack of a socially accepted ethical code of conduct ultimately drew IG so deeply into the crimes of the SS that the name of the company will probably remain inextricably linked with Auschwitz.

¹²⁵ The mechanisms at work here were evidently similar to those identified by Browning, *Männer*, p. 222, 23 1, among the members of the police battalion I O I, although they came from a completely different social class.

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This book is dedicated to all survivors of Monowitz and to all those for whom the question of "Why?" is still relevant more than fifty years after the liberation of the Auschwitz camp.

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Bernd Wagner

Tables and illustrations

Table 1: Workforce of the Auschwitz plant on November 15, 1942¹

<i>Workforce</i>	<i>Commercial workforce</i>			<i>Employees</i>	
	Specialist workers	auxiliary workers*	Young workers	techn.ercial.	comm
1. German					
a) I G members male	331	286	1 776	111	358
female		197			177
b) Relatives					
foreign companies	1 122	38 1	22	91	58 9
male		5			
female					
German document together	1 453	86 9	1 798	2 02	622
2. relatives					
foreign nations					
a) Poland					
in the Reich territory					
native Poles male	1 727	4 936			20
female	7	8 15			5
in the Governor General nement					
Polish Male	43	397			
female	1	477			
Forced laborers		6 58			
b) Italian	7 37	352		6	24
c) French male	7 19	2 42			8
female		2			
d) Belgian (Flemish) male	149	31		7	79
female		23			6
e) Czechs	43	26			
f) Croats	1	862			
g) Other nations	19	17			
h) Eastern workers male	49	588			
female		1 030			
i) Western Ukrainian (honorary Kgf.)	4	108			
k) Prisoners		1 388			
"Foreign nationals" and "Foreign" overall	3 499	11 952		15	145
<i>Total construction workforce</i>	<i>4 952</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>8211 798</i>	<i>217</i>	<i>767</i>

* This category also included apprentices and retrainees.

¹ Table according to APMO, D-Au III, Monowitz, 9c, 'Leistungskampf', p. 64. The names of the individual labor categories have been adopted.

Table 2: Diagnoses of the prisoners selected from Monowitz concentration camp²

Diagnosis:	Numb er	Percent
Physical weakness	1 818	37,10
Diarrhea	282	5,75
Injuries (broken bones, gunshot wounds, etc.)	279	5,69
Edema and phlegmon	902	18,42
Pneumonia and other respiratory diseases	1027	20,95
Tuberculosis	199	4,06
Frostbite	138	2,81
Typhoid fever (including experiments)	256	5,22
Total	4 901	100,00
without indication of diagnosis	2 394	

Table 3: Structure of the workforce in various IG plants on 1. 12. 1944

IG plants	External number of	Foreign workers	War work channels inclined	KL- %	German prisoners %	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	
Leuna	23,5	4,1	7,3	5,0	60,0	31 391
Ludwigshafen	18,7	7,1	10,8	2,4	61,0	38 330
Schkopau	33,2	5,3	4,0	0	57,5	11 931
Auschwitz	40,3	12,7	2,1	26,6	18,3	178 28
Heydebreck	42,3	6,6	10,5	0	40,6	10 059

**This category includes temporary workers, forced laborers, prisoners and concentration camp inmates, whereby only the last group is relevant in Auschwitz. According to Nuremberg Doc. NI-1 1412, NI-3762.*

² Data from Nürnberg. doc. NI-1 5299, statement Ungar, 10.5. 1948, p. 2. Ungar's statistics are based on the information in Nürnberg. doc. NI-14997, HKB-Monowitz-Buch.

Table 4: Compilation of data on the 'number of (inmate) laborers deployed at JG Auschwitz and the occupancy of the Monowitz camp'³

Date	Prisoners in the Work assignment	Labor force before	Total number of prisoners in Labor force	prisoners in Monowitz
21.4.41	150		256	
4.6.41	120		400	
9.8.41	816			
25.10.41	1350		2700	
11.1.42	104			
6.3.42	100		5000	
8.4.42	750			
5.5.42	1600		8750	
13.7.42			11200	
2.9.42	0		13359	
1.1.1.42	1750*			2050
15.11.42			20555	
1.12.42	1870*	7494	9400*	2200
1.1.43	3200*			3750
12.2.43	1450*			1700
21.3.43	3517			
24.3.43			20000*	
5.5.43	3063	16368	19400*	
7.7.43	3973	17934	21900*	
1.9.43	5251	19427	24700*	
9.9.43	5400		26000	
13.10.43	5501	20282	25800*	
10.12.43	5000		29000	
5.1.44	4532	19595	24100*	
23.2.44	4277	18884	23150*	
15.3.44	4793	19260	24040*	
19.4.44	5697	19796	25500*	
1.5.44	6035			7100
1.6.44	7800			9150
1.7.44	8500			10050
1.8.44	9650			11350
20.8.44	8500			10000
1.9.44	8600			10100
1.10.44	8250			9700
1.1.1.44	8250			9700
1.1.2.44	8900			10500
1.1.45	8800			10350

³ There are no consistent statistics on this. The overview above summarizes the scattered individual documents. Values marked with * were calculated or derived from other data.

Table 5: Monthly food rations of the inmates and other labor categories of IG Auschwitz⁴

	Blue-collar and white-collar workers				Prisoners of war			Russ. Prisoners of war and civilian prisoners			Concentration camp prisoners ⁵			Poland		
Labor category ⁶	N	L	S	*	N	L	S	N	L	S	N	L	S	N	L	S
Meat ⁷	1 600				800	1 520	1 920	800	1 200	1 600	800	1 200	1 600	750	1 150	1 500
Butter	675	675	675	950	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Margarine	200	280	350	-	875	930	1 330	520	600	800	520	600	800	500	580	750
R-bread	7 300	9 700	12 900	10 300	9 300	10 500	13 000	10 400	10 400	13 600	10 400	10 400	13 600	10 000	10 000	13 000
W-Bread	2 000	2 000	2 000	2 000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Nutrients Jam	500	500	500	500	850	850	850	600	600	600	600	600	600	600	600	600
Sugar Coffee	700	700	700	700	700	700	700	400	400	400	700	700	700	400	400	400
substitute	900	900	900	900	700	700	700	440	440	440	-	-	-	440	440	440
Soup	250	250	250	250	250	250	250	125	125	125	125	125	125	250	250	250
substitute	850	850	850	850	850	850	850	850	850	850	850	850	850	850	850	850
Potatoes	for all 30 000 gr. per month															
Cheese	125	125	125	125	125	125	125	125	125	125	-	-	-	125	125	125
Curd	250	250	250	250	125	125	125	125	125	125	125	125	125	-	-	-
cheese	15			15												
Skimmed milk	-	15	15	-	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Slaughter fats			250													
Vegetables	for all 250 gr. per day [about 7 500 gr. per month].															

⁴ Table according to Nuremberg Doc. NI-98 10, statement by Reinhold, August 19, 1947, p. 17 f. Rations for the years 1943/44.

⁵ These were the rations to which the prisoners were officially entitled. Due to theft and other forms of "redistribution" within the camp, the actual quantities issued were usually considerably lower.

⁶ In addition to the racial-ideological classification, there was also a differentiation according to the severity of the work to be carried out, from "normal" (N) to "long laborer" (L) to "heavy laborer" (S). Among German workers and employees, there was also a distinction between those who were "camp caterers" (*) and those who had their own household outside the factory premises.

⁷ Reinhold notes the following: "Meat for prisoners was delivered from the Auschwitz concentration camp and consisted for the most part of D-class meat or horse meat. The above sentences are constructed to the best of my recollection after two years."

Table 6: List of subcamps of KL Auschwitz⁸

Secondary storage	Time of the Furnishings	Number of prisoners in
Altdorf		January 1
Old Hammer (Stara Kuznia)	1944	948 ⁹
Bismarckhütte (Hajduki/Chorzow)	1944	192
Tin hammer (Blachownia)	1.4.1944	3 958
Bobrek	1944	213
Brno (Bmo)		36
Budy		(3 13)
Charlottengrube (Rydultowy)	1944	833
Chelmek	1942	
Eintrachthütte (Swietochlowice)	1943	1 297
Freudenthal (Bruntal)	1944	
Fürstengrube (Wesola)	2.9.1943	1 283
Gliwice I to IV	May 1 1944	3 129
Golleschau	1942	1 008
Güntergrube (Ledziny)	1944	586
Good hope (Janina pit, Libiaz)	1943	853
Harmense		
Hindenburg (Zabrze)	1 1944	70
Hubertus hut (Lagiewniki)		202
Jawischowitz (Jawiszowice)	1 1942	1 988
Kobier		
Kunzendorf		
Lagischa (Lagisza)	15.6. 1 1943	
Siemianowice hut	April 1 1944	937
Lichtewerden (Svetla)	1 1944	
Monowitz (Buna)	28.1.1. 1942	10 223
New Badger (Jaworzno)	1943	3 664
New Town (Prudnik)	1 1944	
Plawy		(1 38)
Rajsko (farmyard)		(204)
Sosnowitz I and II	1944	863
Trzebinia	1944	64 1
Chekhovice-Dziedzice	1944	561
Total		33 023
Female prisoners		2 095
Total number of prisoners in the external camps (Auschwitz III/KL Monowitz)		35 118
Auschwitz I and II ¹⁰		31 894
Total number of prisoners at KL Auschwitz		67 012

⁸ The information is based on Krakowski, *Satellite Camps*, p. 50 ff.; USHMM, *Historical Atlas of the Holocaust*; dates according to Piper, *Arbeitseinsatz*.

⁹ Figures according to Czech, *Kalendarium*, p. 967 f.

¹⁰ This includes the values for Plawy, Rajsko and Budy; see Czech, *Kalendarium*, p. 966.

Diagram 1: Labor force structure of IG Farbenindustrie AG ¹⁹³⁹⁻¹⁹⁴⁴¹¹

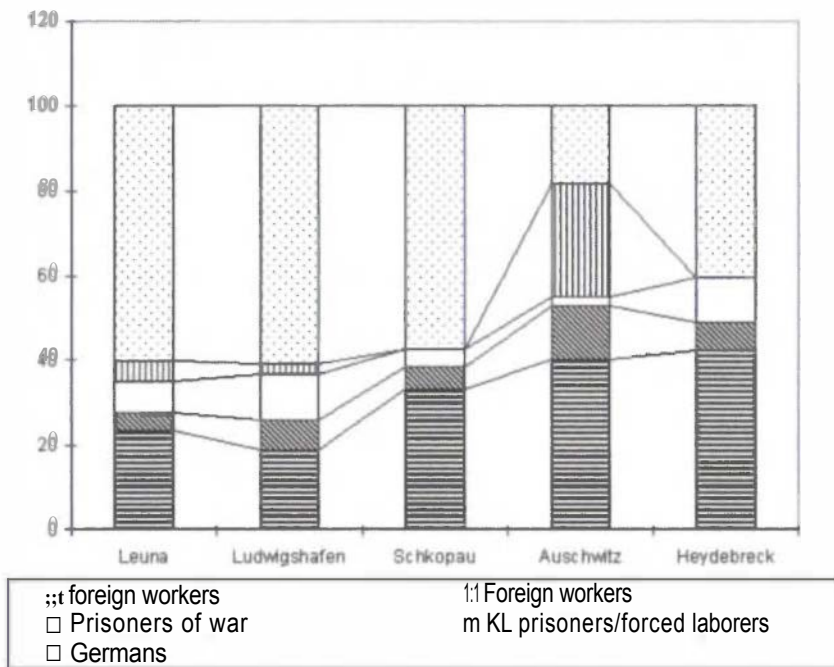
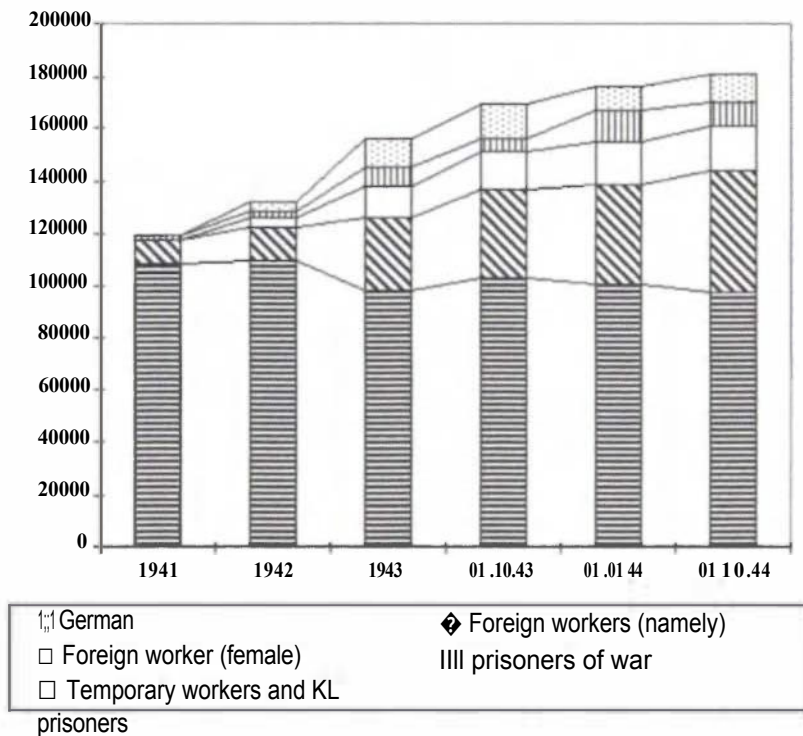
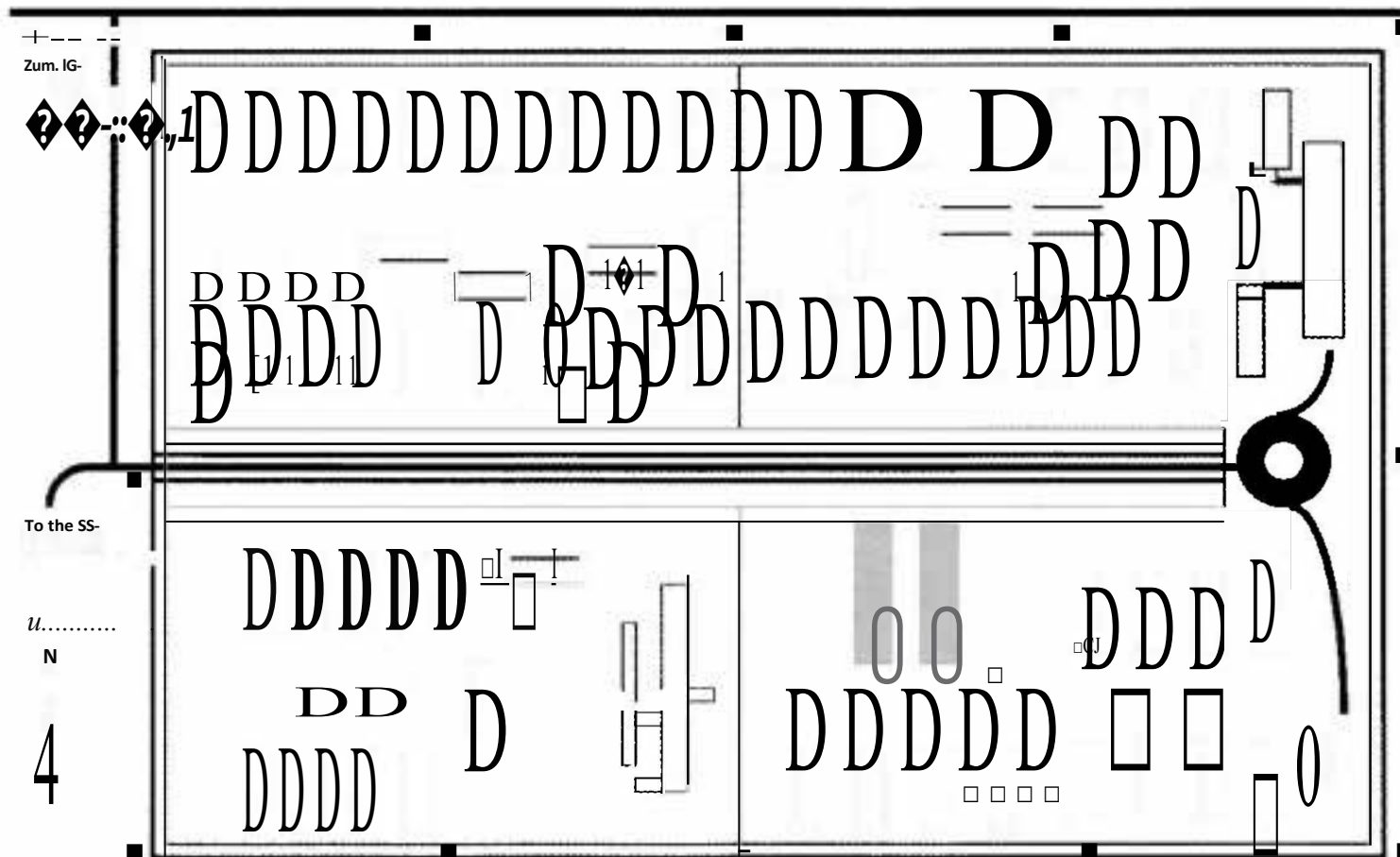


Diagram 2: Workforce structure in various IG plants (October 1, 1944)¹²



¹¹ After the data in Nümbg. doc. NI-1 141 1.

¹² According to the data in Nümbg. doc. NI-1 141 2, NI-3712.



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Sources and literature

I. Archival documents

1. Federal Archives Berlin
(BAB) NS 3 SS-Wirtschaftsverwaltungshauptamt
NS 31 SS-Hauptamt
R 2 Reichsfinanzministerium
R 7 Reichswirtschaftsministerium
R 41 Reichsarbeitsministerium
R 43 I, II Reichskanzlei
R 49 Reich Commissioner for the Consolidation of
the German Nation
R58 Reich Main Security Office
R Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle
59 Immigration Center Litzmannstadt IG
R 69 Farbenindustrie AG
R 8128 GBA
15.01/3 1
Personnel files
SS-HO
2. Foundation Archive of the Parties and Mass Organizations of the GDR in the
Federal Archives (BAB-SAPMO)
DY 30/IV A2/2.028 Agitation and Propaganda Department at the
Central Committee of the SED, North Office
DY 30/IV A2/10.02 Western Commission at the (Politburo of the)
Central Committee of the SED
DY 30/IV A2/10.03/8 "Work office"
I 2/3/153 Files on former political prisoners
e.g. from KL Auschwitz
3. Federal Archives Berlin-Zehlendorf branch, former Berlin Document Center
(BDC), now part of the Federal Archives, Reich Department
Personnel files
SS suspension
files
4. Institute for Contemporary History (IfZ)
ED 436/1-88 Erich Kuby Collection; Documentation on KL
Auschwitz
F-37/3, 7, Heinrich Himmler's speeches 1943/44
8 F-63 Diary J. Kremer
F-65 Minutes of the SS judge Dr. Morgen
F- 183, Varia (II), 17, 24 Miscellaneous
F-506/12, **SS (IV)**, Circular **WV HA/D**
93 Fa-55 KL Auschwitz
Fa-67 concentration camp

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| Fa-86 | KL Auschwitz |
| Fa-506/12 , SS (IV) | Inspection of the KL |
| Fa-506/13 , SS (IV) | Correspondence of the |
| Fa-6 00/3 | RFSS Miscellaneous |
| Fa-7 16 | Aerial photographs of the US Air Force |
| G3 0 | French military tribunal in Rastatt Supreme |
| G-2 0/1 | People's Tribunal in Krakow, verdict against |
| | Liebehenschel and others, 19 47 |
| Gb 08.1 4/1 -2 | Trial against the camp elder of the Au |
| | schwitz subcamp Jawischowitz, Paul |
| | Skrodzki et al. |
| Gf03.27 | Expert opinion in the criminal proceedings |
| | against Burger and Erber |
| Gf 03.39 | Criminal proceedings against Kapos of KL |
| | Au schwitz |
| MA- 12 5 | RKF |
| MA- 1 83 | OKW , Military Economics and Armaments Office |
| MA- 193 | RJM |
| MA-2 84 | RFSS/Pers. staff, records management |
| MA-2 85 | RFSS/Pers. staff, records management |
| MA-2 89 | RFSS/Pers. staff, records management |
| MA-29 5 | RFSS/Pers. staff, records management |
| MA-3 04 | RFSS/Pers. staff, records management |
| MA-3 05 | RFSS/Pers. staff, records management |
| MA-3 06 | RFSS/Pers. staff, records management |
| MA-3 12 | RFSS/Pers. staff, records management |
| MA-3 15 | RFSS/Pers. staff, records management |
| MA-329 | SS-Führungshauptamt |
| MA-3 | RFSS/Pers. staff |
| 43 MA- | Natzweiler concentration camp/WV HA |
| 4 14 | SS |
| MA-43 4 | SS |
| MA-446 | SS |
| MA-553 | Report Dr. Hans Münch |
| MA-56 4 | RJM |
| MA-62 5 | OKW |
| MA-6 59 | NI series; NO series; PS series |
| Nuremberg Documents | Case VI (indictment document books, |
| (Nümbg. Dok.) | defense documents, trial transcript) |
| | Newspaper clippings collection Witness |
| ZA | writings |
| ZS | |
5. Public prosecutor's office at the Regional Court of Frankfurt a. M. (StA Frankfurt a. M.) Criminal case 4 Ks2 /63 against Mulka et al.
Criminal case 4 Ks3 /63 against Burger et al.
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Investigation case4 Js 798 /64 against Ontl and others (here against Buthner) Investigation files of the Frankfurt Auschwitz trials

6. Bayer Archive, Leverkusen

(BAL) 004 -B-0 14 -002 004 -D-Au 004 -D-H 0 15 -C-004 -00 1 08 1 -002 -00 7 14 1 -00 5-00 3 20 7-00 7-002 20 7-00 7-004 20 7-0 10 0 7-0 1 1 208 -0 10 -00 1 2 1 1 -00 3 700 -5 39 700 -750 700 -9 70 -0 1 700 - 1064	Personnel and social issues at BASF Credit requirements for IG Auschwitz Heydebreck plant Proofs of credit Auschwitz plant 194 1-1944 Julius Klein Commission K meetings Lawsuit against IG Farbenindustrie V erschiedenes Auschwitz Trials Auschwitz Trials IG Trial Leverkusen plant Management department Directorate Chemist Duty Directorate Auschwitz liquidation
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7. BASF Corporate Archives, Ludwigshafen

IG AG - A 25 1 IG AG - A 25 1 /5 IG AG - A B4 B4 - 1 70 B4 - 898 B4 - 9 1 1 Auschwitz plant Picture archive	/4IG Auschwitz Processing Auschwitz 282IG Colors Unbundling Legal department Kressendorf-Kattowice Auschwitz Buna IV Building Ref. 9 54 at the IG
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ZA-43b ZA- 14 75 ZA-1 532	TEA protocols Rattwitz planning documents Buna pricing 19 37- 1944
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D-Au III , t.l, korespondencja IG colors
 D-Au III, Tygodniowe Sprawozdana IG Farben,
 D-Au-111/Monowitz9c 'Leistungskampf'
 Dpr. Mau/7 [Korschach No. 66]
 Dpr. Mau/ 12 Maurer-Prozeß
 Osw/Posener/ 14 (No. inw. 29626)

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Abbreviations

ACD	Allied Chemical and Dye Corporation
ADRWS	Amt für Deutsche Roh- und Werkstoffe
AG	Aktiengesellschaft
Agfa	AG for aniline production
AGK	Archiwum Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu (Archives of the Main Commission for the Investigation of Crimes against the Polish People), Warsaw
AH	The Auschwitz booklets
AHK	Allied High Commission
APMO	Archiwum Państwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu (Archives of the State Museum in Auschwitz)
BAB	Federal Archives, Berlin
BAL	Bayer Archive,
BASF	Leverkusen
BDC	Badische Anilin und Soda Fabriken
BV (prisoner)	Former Berlin Document Center (now BAB) Temporary detainee
CEH	Central European History
CWH	Chemische Fabrik Griesheim Elektron AG
DAW	Chemische Werke Hüls GmbH
DEST	Deutsche Ausrüstungswerke GmbH
DH	Deutsche Erd- und Steinwerke
FFB	Dachauer Hefte
FWH	Farbenfabrikenwerke, formerly Friedr. Bayer & Co. AG
GBA	Farbwerke Hoechst
GBChem	General Plenipotentiary for Labor Deployment General Plenipotentiary for Special Issues in Chemical Production
Gestapo	Secret State Police History
GG	and Society
GWU	History in science and teaching Prisoner
HKB	infirmary
Ed.	Publisher
HSSPF	Higher SS and Police Leader
HTO	Main Trusteeship Office East
HvA	Booklets from Auschwitz
I CI	Imperial Chemical Industries
IfZ	Institute for Contemporary History, Münden
IG (I.G.)	Interest group (Farbenindustrie AG) in
i.L.	liquidation
i.S.	in the sense
JRSO	Jewish Restitution Successor Organization
KB	Commandant's Order
KL	Concentration camp (KZ abbreviation used in quotations)

KRA	War Raw Materials Department in the Prussian War Ministry
NI	Document series of the Nuremberg Trials
NMT	Nuremberg Military Tribunal, also TWC
NO	Document Series of the Nuremberg Trials
NPL	New Political Literature National Socialism
NS	Documents of the International Military Tribunal in
Nuremberg	Nuremberg National Socialist German Workers' Party
doc. NSDAP	Upper Silesia
OS	Organization Todt
OT	Nuremberg Trials document series Raw
PS	materials and foreign exchange staff
RDS	Reich Ministry of Finance
RFM	Reichsführer SS
RFSS	Reichsmark
RM	Reich Office for Economic Expansion
RWA	Reich Ministry of Economics
RWM	Foundation Archive of the Parties and Membership Organizations of the
SAPMO	GDR (in the BAB)
SEA	Staff Evidence Analysis
SED	Socialist Unity Party of Germany Security
SDG	Service
SDG	Medical service
SS	grade Schutzstaffel
SStB	Special site order
Frankfurt a.M. Public Prosecutor's Office	Public prosecutor's office at the Regional Court of
Frankfurt a.M.	
Stapo	State police Location order
StB	Criminal code
StGB	Security Detainee Technical
SV (prisoner)	Committee of the IG Times
TEA	Literary Supplement
TLS	Trials of War Criminals, also NMT
TWC	United Kingdom
UK	United Restitution Organization
URO	United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Washington D.C.
USHMM	Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte
Vtz	Four-year plan
V JPL	Chemical factories, vorm. Weiler - ter Meer AG
WTM	Economic Administration Main Office of the
WVHA	Waffen-SS Forced Labor Camps
ZAL	Central construction
ZBL	management of the SS for
z.b.V. (zbV)	special use
ZfG	Journal of Historical Science

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